Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred

Vol. 34, Issue 2
FEBRUARY 2026

Law Man

New Jersey-bred Book'em Danno heads strong cast of regional stars

Country Life Farm

STANDING THE MID-ATLANTIC'S

SOLID VALUE STALLIONS

Year after year, Country Life stallions deliver winner's circle success to Mid-Atlantic breeders

DIVINE INTENTIONS wins the 2025 Shamrock Rose S by 3 lengths, then follows up with a second in the Parx Future Stars S, for 2 wins in 4 starts at 2.

Multiple stakes-placed **FREEZE THE FIRE** topped off 2025 with 4 consecutive wins (E speed figures of 79, 90, 104, 97) and earnings of $296,945.

QUINT'S BREW wins the 2026 $100,000 Jennings H at Laurel Park, bringing his earnings to $421,240, establishing him among the top handicap horses in the Mid-Atlantic.

Divining Rod

Tapit–Precious Kitten, by Catienus

$1,500 LFSN

Friesan Fire

A.P. Indy–Bollinger, by Dehere

$1,000 LFSN

Mosler

War Front–Gold Vault, by Arch

$2,000 LFSN

Take advantage of the 40% higher breeder bonuses for Maryland-sired Maryland breds in 2026–it just grew to 33.6%!

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3 days: March 12–14

$150,000 VA-RESTRICTED OVERNIGHT HANDICAPS
(includes $50,000 VA-bred/sired)
BOSTON H 4 & up, 7 fur.
STELLAR WIND H F&M, 4 & up, 6 fur.

VA-RESTRICTED RACES
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Colonial Downs Spring condition book
www.colonialdowns.com

For Virginia-Bred Owners

- **VA restricted purses at Colonial Downs are 25% higher than the open races**
- **Earn a 50% bonus on earned purses for 1st-4th in open races at Colonial Downs**

For Virginia-Bred Breeders

- **Bonuses for VA-Breds for 1st-3rd finishes in open races in North America (excludes state-bred, state-sired races)**
- **Bonuses for all 1st-3rd finishes at Colonial Downs meets and NSA meets**

For Virginia-Bred Developers

Defined as the owner of horse in first lifetime start

- **Up to a 25% bonus for any open race win** in the Mid-Atlantic & NY, including NSA sanctioned meets

For Virginia-Certified Owners

- **VA restricted purses at Colonial Downs are 25% higher than the open races**

For Virginia-Certified Developers

** Defined as the owner of horse in first lifetime start*

- **Up to a 25% bonus for any open race win** in the Mid-Atlantic & NY, including NSA sanctioned meets
- **10% bonus for state-bred restricted wins** in the Mid-Atlantic & NY, including NSA sanctioned meets

BONUSES WILL NOT BE EARNED FOR OUT-OF-STATE WINS DURING THE COLONIAL DOWNS MEET

For complete details on the VA-Bred and VA-certified programs, go to **VaBred.org**
Or contact the Virginia Thoroughbred Association at **434-977-3716**

Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred

— Set List —

Standout 2025 campaigns send regional stars to future

Racehorses bred in the Mid-Atlantic shined on every stage in 2025. They gallop off in all directions for 2026, led by new sire Mindframe, top sprinter Book'em Danno, new broodmare Future Is Now, Grade 1 winner Seismic Beauty, rising star Mailata and others. By Joe Clancy. Page 24

Vestal's Gap finds his calling at Makeover

Winless (and nearly worthless) as a racehorse, West Virginia-bred Vestal's Gap thrives after learning new skills in Colorado and finding success at 2025 Thoroughbred Makeover. By Ella Barnett. Page 38

Trackside: Penn National

Trainer Brandon Kulp and the Warrior's Reward ownership team put up big numbers at Penn National in 2025 . By Ali Çetinok. Page 42

Trackside: Parx Racing

Carguys Racing speeds to success behind stakes-winning homebred filly Divine Intentions. By Paul Halloran. Page 46

Trackside: Parx Racing

Top Notch Racing enjoys strong year with busy claiming stable in Pennsylvania. By John Piassek. Page 50

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On our cover: New Jersey-bred star Book'em Danno surveys his domain after winning at Saratoga last summer.
Carlos J. Calo / Eclipse Sportswire

West Virginia
Thoroughbred Breeders Association

2026 Stallion Season Auction

February 14 – 18

TWO AMAZING AUCTIONS OFFERING SEASONS FOR:

Army Star
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Beduin Fighter
Bee Jersey
Bullsbay
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Charge It
Contra Mundum
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Cupid
Dark Canyon
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Dominant Soul
Drain the Clock
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Enticed
Fight With Honor
Flameaway
Gufo
Honest Mischief
Itza Mirrakle
Juba
Last Print
Load to Fire
Master Rick
Modernist
Mr. Monomoy
Mullion
Need More Mo
Newgrange
Oak Room
Proxy
Redirect
Sacred Life
Segovia
Shirl's Speight
Simovic
Snag
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Tale of Ekati
Tale of Silence
Tapit Trice
Texas Red
Title Ready
Uncle Berley
Uncle Lino
Uptowncharlybrown
Warrant

New offerings still being added!

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MARYLAND-BRED RACE FUND

Registered Maryland/Virginia-Bred and/or Maryland/Virginia-Sired Stakes Schedule Through March 2026

March 7
$100,000 CONNIVER 4YO & Up, Fillies and Mares, 7 Furlongs
$100,000 NOT FOR LOVE 4YO & Up, 6 Furlongs

2026 Stallion Season Auction

Benefiting
THE Maryland Horse FOUNDATION

February 7-10

Barbados (Speightstown-WV)
Blofeld (Quality Road-MD)
Bourbon Courage (Lion Heart-MD)
Cupid (Tapit-MD)
Divining Rod (Tapit-MD)
Eastwood (Speightstown-PA)
Enticed (Medaglia d'Oro-PA)
Friesan Fire (A.P. Indy-MD)
Mosler (War Front-MD)
NY Traffic (Cross Traffic-PA)
Uptowncharlybrown (Limehouse-PA)
Warrant (Constitution-MD)

Check the website as more seasons are added.
Accepting donations through February 2
Visit **ThoroughbredAuctions.com** to learn more

Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred

Volume 34, Issue 2

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Mid-AtlanticThoroughbred (ISSN 1056-3245) is owned and published monthly with the exception of August by the Maryland Horse Breeders Association, 321 Main Street, Reisterstown, MD 21136. (410) 252-2100; Fax (888) 616-9797. Subscription rate $36 per year. Subscription rate outside the U.S. $91 per year (surface mail), payable by U.S. money order or by bank draft payable in U.S. funds. Canadian GST No. 130277759; C.P.C. IPM No. 0956988. Subscription price included in annual membership dues to the Maryland Horse Breeders Association.

Periodicals postage paid at Lutherville-Timonium, Md. 21093 and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Mid-AtlanticThoroughbred, 321 Main St., Reisterstown, MD 21136.

Single copies: $5 current issue, plus $4 postage and handling.
$15 Stallion Directory (December issue);
$15 Statistical Review (March issue), plus $5 postage and handling. Maryland residents add 6% sales tax.

Mid-AtlanticThoroughbred is mailed to paid subscribers; to licensed owners and trainers in the eight-state region; and to active members of participating breeder associations in the region.

Printed by The Lane Press, Burlington, VT
Printed in the U.S.A.

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LAUREL PARK FEBRUARY EVENTS

GENERAL GEORGE & BARBARA FRITCHIE STAKES DAY

SATURDAY ★ FEB 14

- $200,000 GENERAL GEORGE STAKES
- $200,000 BARBARA FRITCHIE STAKES
- $100,000 POST TIME STAKES
- $100,000 NELLIE MORSE STAKES

LAST CHANCE FIRST CHANCE

HANDICAPPING TOURNAMENT

SATURDAY • FEBRUARY 14

Breeders' Cup BCBC Betting Challenge 2026

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GET INFO AT LAURELPARK.COM

2026 Maryland Broodmare Incentive Program

Get back 20% of your purchase price on NEW Maryland Broodmares

To Qualify:

Mares foaling in 2026 must be purchased from a recognized public auction. The purchased mare must not have foaled in Maryland the previous two years and must be in foal for 2026 at the time of purchase. The mare must drop her 2026 foal* in Maryland and be bred to a Maryland stallion** in the 2026 breeding season.

Incentive Structure

20% reimbursement of purchase price (with a minimum qualifying purchase of $5,000 and a maximum payout per mare of $6,000). Limited reimbursement up to $10,000 to one individual/entity. Program limited to a total of $50,000 for 2026 incentives.

Application Requirements

- **Invoice** from a recognized sales company and proof of payment
- Copy of mare's **registration papers**
- **Vet certificate** confirming the mare is at least 45 days in foal
- Signed **Confirmation of Cover** from farm standing Maryland stallion
- Signed **Commitment to Program Terms** by applicant

Administration & Compliance: The program runs until the end of the 2026 breeding season. Available funds of $50,000 for 2026 applicants. Incentives will be paid on a first come, first served basis. A wait list will be created as fully completed and accepted applications are received in the mail. If a mare aborts or does not get in-foal, eligibility will be retained for the 2026 program if all other criteria are met. Ownership of mare cannot be transferred until program commitments are fulfilled.

Maryland Horse Breeders Association
410-252-2100 • MarylandThoroughbred.com

**Foal must be eligible to be registered Maryland-bred. **Must be a verified Maryland stallion*

MARYLAND-BRED BREEDER BONUSES ON THE RISE

IN 2026, MARYLAND-BREDS WILL EARN MORE FOR THEIR BREEDERS

PAYING MORE IN 2026:

- Maryland-sired Maryland breds earn 33.6%* breeder bonuses on purses earned for first through third finishes in all overnight races in Maryland. That's 40% more than out-of-state sired!
- Out of state-sired Maryland-breds earn 24% breeder bonuses on purses earned for first through third finishes in all overnight races in Maryland.
- All Maryland-breds earn 24% breeder bonuses on purses earned for first through third finishes in Maryland stakes races (capped at $100,000)
- MD-sired MD-breds of 2022 or older earn an additional 8% breeder bonus on maiden wins**
- MD stallions earn 8% on purses earned for first through third finishes in all overnight races and stakes races (capped at $100K) in Maryland.
- **MD-breds continue to run for 30% more** In Maryland, registered Maryland-bred horses are eligible to compete for 30% additional purse earnings in unrestricted overnight races, comprised of a 15% Owner Bonus and a 15% Developer Bonus, as established under the Maryland Thoroughbred Purse Account jointly administered by the MTHA and TMJC.

*As of 1/26; subject to change as determined semi-annually by the Maryland Racing Commission. ONLY registered Maryland-breds are eligible for MD Fund bonuses. MD Stallions must be registered with MD Fund program. Bonuses for Maryland Million Day are calculated separately. *Beginning with 2-year-olds of 2025, and stallions must be registered. ** Stallions must be registered.*

Jim McCue photo

Maryland Horse
MarylandThoroughbred.com

MARYLAND: A foundation of greatness, a bright future ahead

Say It Again

"I like it when they keep all four feet on the ground."
Northview Stallion Station farm manager Francisco Torres, about his job at the annual open house/stallion show in January

"It hasn't affected him, but to me you're taking away from the breeders, and the people who worked with the horse every day. They can't say they had their hands on an Eclipse winner or an Eclipse Award finalist and that's who it really matters to."
Claiborne Farm's Jacob West, on Mindframe's absence in the list of Eclipse finalists

"He has a win picture and he sent word back that he wanted to meet him. He seems like a big, laid-back dude and the name really fits this horse well."
Trainer Butch Reid, who trains 3-year-old Pennsylvania-bred Mailata (named for Philadelphia Eagles offensive lineman Jordan)

"I guess I set the bar a little high. I'm not sure where we go from here."
Trainer Robbie Bailes, who won 16 races for owners Eric and Nancy Rizer in 2025

"I enjoy it, but I look forward to the end of the season. That's the beauty of our game. You get that month or two down and then you come back ready to go. We're back to zero now; we've got to prove ourselves all over again."
Steeplechase trainer Mark Beecher, on the benefits of an off-season

Go Figure

10 Times Pennsylvania-bred Divine Miracle was claimed in a 41-start career. The list includes three claims apiece by trainers Kate DeMasi and Jamie Ness. The son of Distorted Humor and the Giant's Causeway mare La Boheme didn't mind the changes of scenery as he won 16 races and earned $508,537 before earning a retirement from latest owner Top Notch Racing in 2025.

8 Gray/roan horses listed in December's *Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred* stallion directory – Blofeld, Cross Traffic, Cupid, Il Villano, NY Traffic, Post Time, Redirect and Tyson.

17 Racetracks visited by On the Sly, a top horse ridden by Gregg McCarron in the mid-1970s. The Florida-bred started 21 times as a 3-year-old in 1976 and followed up with 22 more in 1977. The Mel Gross trainee won 14 races, finished second 10 times and was fifth in the 1976 Kentucky Derby-G1.

1 Broodmare purchased by exercise rider/assistant trainer Emma Wolfe and her parents Alice and Jim (in partnership with Sycamore Hall Farm's Mike Golden) to breed to Post Time this year.

54 Best Turned Out awards for groom Gustavo Hernandez at Laurel Park in 2025, tops among all award winners.

353 Training victories for trainer Jamie Ness, tops in North America for 2026. A Maryland Thoroughbred breeder and farm owner, the Mid-Atlantic-based Ness edged Steve Asmussen by 22 wins (while having 860 fewer starts).

16 Two-year-old winners (of 24 races) trained by Gary Capuano in 2025.

BLOFELD

Quality Road–Storm Minstrel (Storm Cat)

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74% winners/runners

Maryland's top-booking stallion the past 2 seasons –
80 2-year-olds waiting in the wings
THE BEST IS YET TO COME!

Open Mic Night

Maryland horsemen David Wade and Dr. Tom Bowman weren't auditioning for a *Saturday Night Live* skit during a Maryland Thoroughbred Partnership meeting in January, but somebody might want to call Lorne Michaels. The conversation addressed enticing media members to cover foaling season – especially overnight foal-watch sessions – and the benefit of waiting for better weather.

Wade: "It gets cold in the barns this time of year."

Bowman: "How would you know? All you do is call the veterinarian."

Not sure about foal watch, but the media might cover a half-hour of Wade and Bowman telling jokes.

Names of the Month

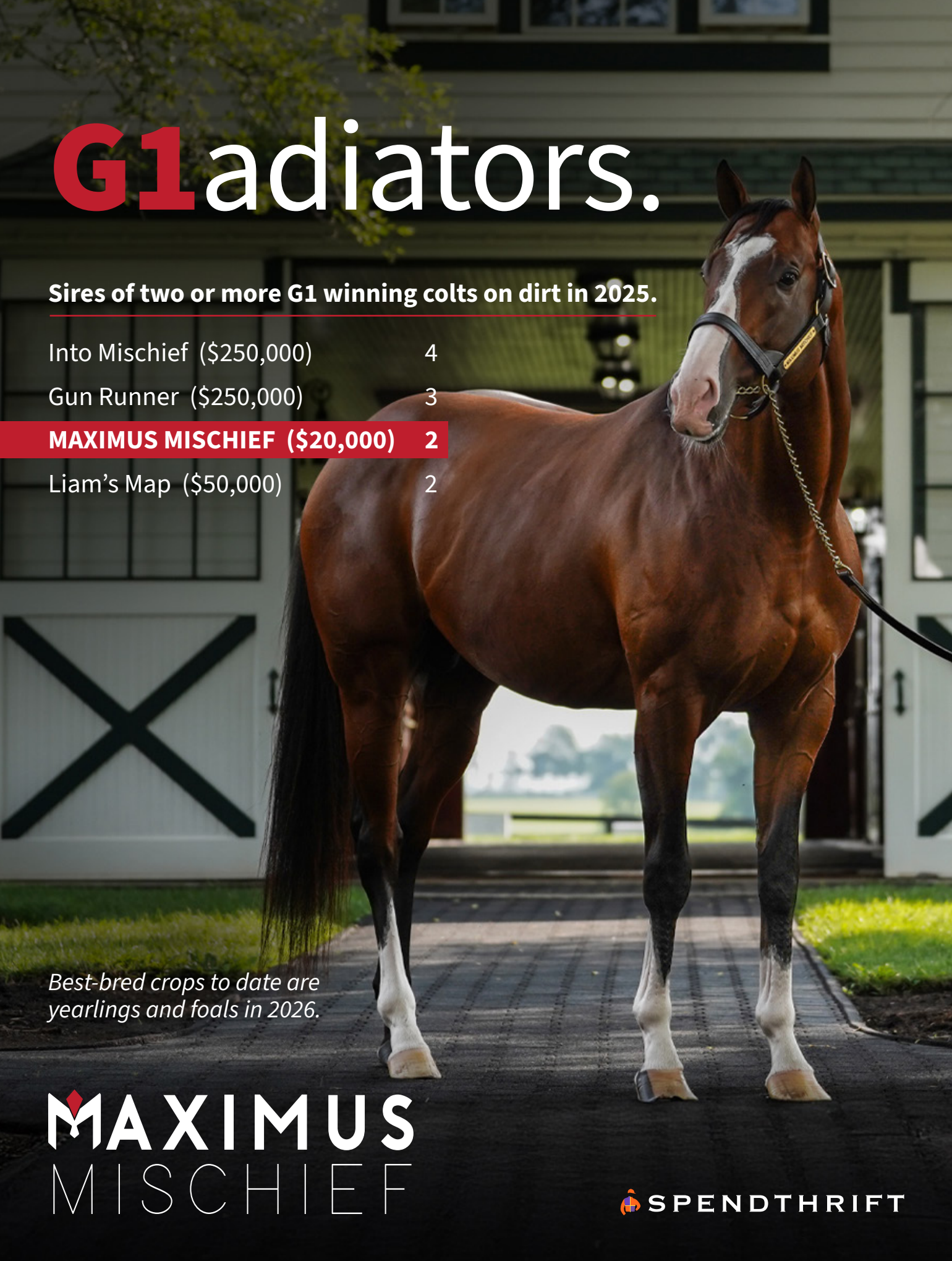
Compiled by Barrie Reightler

Red Zone Runner: For football fans. Third in Laurel Park's Heft Stakes in December and Parx Racing's Pennsylvania Nursery in November, Tom Coulter's Pennsylvania-bred is out of Look Deep.

Quick to Accuse: A winner at Delaware Park in 2025, the 6-year-old is by Accelerate out of Speightful Affair.

DAVID WADE

The barns at Northview Stallion Station and the rest of the region can be frosty in the winter; just ask Tom Bowman.



G1adiators.

Sires of two or more G1 winning colts on dirt in 2025.

Into Mischief ($250,000)	4
Gun Runner ($250,000)	3
MAXIMUS MISCHIEF ($20,000)	**2**
Liam's Map ($50,000)	2

Best-bred crops to date are yearlings and foals in 2026.

MAXIMUS MISCHIEF

SPENDTHRIFT

Milestones

Retired

As the general manager of the Maryland State Fair and Agricultural Society, D. Andrew "Andy" Cashman. He concluded his 10-year role as general manager of the private non-profit, which hosts Thoroughbred racing, the Fasig-Tipton Midlantic sales and the Maryland Horse Breeders Association yearling show among other events at the Timonium complex. During his tenure, Cashman oversaw and achieved many of the Maryland State Fair board of directors' and his team's goals including: more livestock, horse, farm, garden, home arts, and racing competitions; additional agricultural education programs and partnerships; creation of the Birthing Center and U-Learn Farm and Barn; completion of the 10,000-square-foot Harvest Hall to replace the 62-year-old Farm and Garden Building and the Mosner Miller Building that houses the Maryland State Fair Museum; construction of the Maryland State Fair Park Stage and a pole barn storage facility; upgrades to the Grandstand including the addition of the OTB Center, Costas Inn Timonium; improvements to the sales pavilion; installation of solar panels and, new fairgrounds fencing, trees and beautification projects. The Fair's recent Dream Big theme was fitting as Cashman's sister Janice Coroneos recalled 9-year-old Cashman saying, "One day I am going to run the Maryland State Fair." That dream came

true in December 2014, when he was named general manager of the Maryland State Fair and of the fairgrounds rental facilities on the 106-acre campus. Cashman grew up on his family's Baltimore County farm where he raised sheep. He joined the Baltimore County Fair Board at 19 and became its youngest president at 20. He became president of the Carroll County Fair and was general manager of the Eastern National Livestock Show for 15 years. Cashman joined the Maryland State Fair as assistant general manager in 1997 and became general manager in 2014.

Presented

The Thoroughbred Charities of America's Ellen and Herb Moelis Industry Service Award, to the Delaware Horsemen's Assistance Fund for dedication to its mission of providing essential benefits, aid and relief to backstretch licensees at Delaware Park. For nearly six decades, DHAF has been a safety net for horsemen and women. DHAF offers critical services, including a wellness clinic for horsemen and dependents, dental and vision care, prescription drug assistance, counseling services, a scholarship program, financial aid, a backstretch boutique and a food pantry. Each year, more than 850 people rely on DHAF's programs. The award is presented annually to an organization that works to uphold TCA's mission. Past winners include Beyond the Wire, Second Stride, Central Kentucky Riding for Hope, Our Mims Retirement Haven, TAKE2 Second Career Thoroughbred Program, Caribbean Thoroughbred Aftercare, Backstretch Employee Service Team, The Jockey Club's Thoroughbred Incentive Program, CANTER USA, Retired Racehorse Project, Belmont Child Care Association, Old Friends and New York Race Track Chaplaincy.

Posted

Statistical increases in 2025, racing at The Maryland Jockey Club tracks Laurel Park and Pimlico Race Course. Average per-race handle was $365,637, up 14.29 percent from the previous year. Average daily handle for races at Laurel and Pimlico in 2025 reached $3,407,493, a 13.49 percent increase over 2024. Field size increased slightly to 7.65 starters per race from 7.48. The tracks hosted 1,109 races over 119 live racing days in 2025.

For Sale – RiverEdge Farm

Chesapeake City, Maryland.

SEE THE VIDEO!

Rarely does such a unique, well-designed, constructed, and maintained world-class equestrian facility grace the international real estate market.

Set on 510 preserved acres in one of Maryland's largest agricultural preservation areas, RiverEdge Farm blends unique equestrian amenities with timeless elegance. At its heart is a 45,000 sq ft, 31-stall barn/indoor featuring old-world craftsmanship and exceptional design. Highlights include a 100' x 200' indoor arena, twin glass-enclosed observation areas, service bars, a commercial-grade kitchen, and a lofted second level with private offices, an exercise room, and lounge. The barn also includes six grooming/wash stalls, two tack rooms, a laundry room, and a panoramic three-season sitting room.

Complementing the equestrian center is a beautifully appointed 9,000 sq ft, 5 bedroom Georgian-style brick manor home and a luxurious guest home including an enclosed pavilion with a heated indoor pool.

An additional 15-stall center-aisle barn with six-horse Kraft Eurocizer, a fully equipped brick office building, and other operational structures support top-tier equestrian training. RiverEdge has been home to Olympic-level dressage and eventing horses for many years.

The property is co-listed by Patterson Schwartz Land & Farm Division & Monument Sotheby's International Realty.

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Milestones

Retired

Jockey Alberto Delgado, who earned Eclipse Award honors as the champion apprentice of 1982, after riding at Laurel Park Dec. 28. "It's been coming for a long time," Delgado said. "Over the years, I retired, but never because I wanted to. [It was] because of injuries, concussions. At some point, I was heavy, so I had to retire and get everything straight. Last year, I kept telling myself this would be my last year, and I had to build myself up for it. I still love it, but at some point you've got to step down. You can't keep this madness going." Delgado, a second-generation jockey from Puerto Rico, was a hit from his first ride, winning 245 races during his Eclipse Award-winning season. On Aug. 16, 1982, he rode five winners at Delaware, then drove to Timonium, where he swept the late daily double. Delgado surpassed the 200-win mark in each of the next four years. Delgado rode in 42 seasons, topping 1,000 mounts 10 times and finishing with 2,951 wins. In 1995, he guided Oliver's Twist to victory in Pimlico's Grade 3 Federico Tesio Stakes. Four weeks later, they finished second in the Grade 1 Preakness Stakes (at 25-1). "I had a lot of confidence in the horse," Delgado said. "He ran a super, super race that day, and we almost won it." In 2013, Delgado rode California Chrome in five of the colt's first six starts, including a maiden special weight victory at Hollywood Park and a win in the Graduation Stakes at Del Mar. "I worked him for the first time, and I knew he was a super horse," Delgado said. "I told the owner as soon as I broke his maiden that this horse would win the Derby the next year. He was something amazing."

California Chrome won the Kentucky Derby-G1 and the Preakness-G1 under Victor Espinoza and retired with earnings of $14,752,650. Delgado won 115 stakes, 10 graded, and captured five Maryland Million races. Delgado's last mount, Beshareit, finished fourth, and is trained by his wife, Alison. "This morning, when I woke up, I was tearing up," Delgado said. "It's funny. I've always made fun of these athletes when they retire. You see the speech, and they're crying. I'm like 'Ah, what a sissy, I can't believe he's crying'. Now, I'm in those shoes, and I know how they feel. It's tough. It's something you've done all your life. All my generation. I was like the last of the Mohicans. I've got to step aside, and let them do their thing." Delgado, 61, said he plans to train horses.

Captured

Individual 2025 titles at Maryland racetracks, jockey Yedsit Hazlewood, trainer Brittany Russell and the ownership group of Madison Avenue Racing Stable, Morris Kernan Jr. and Jagger Inc. Hazlewood, 17, won108 races at Laurel Park, Pimlico Race Course and Timonium in 2025. He ran away with the fall meet title at Laurel, Sept. 5 to Dec. 28 to put a lid on his first season as a jockey. Originally from Panama, he earned his first victory April 4. Despite a two-month injury layoff, he recorded 95 wins in 2025 at Laurel and Pimlico, surpassing Sheldon Russell by 15 wins. Jevian Toledo and Jaime Rodriguez placed third with 75 tallies at TMJC-operated tracks. Hazlewood also earned riding honors at the Maryland State Fair Meeting at Timonium over the summer. Sheldon Russell won

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Milestones

THE RACING BIZ
The Independent Voice for Mid-Atlantic Racing and Breeding

Emotions high for McKee after My Girl Bridgit scores: Cynthia McKee had to fight to keep her emotions in check after her My Girl Bridgit, the last horse bred by her late husband John McKee, dominated her career debut Jan. 7. Ted Black reports.

Consistent duo Passage East and Takethemoneyhoney fire in 2026 debuts: Never worse than third in 21 combined outings, 4-year-old Passage East and 5-year-old Takethemoney-honey kept on trucking with victories in $100,000 races at Laurel Jan. 17.

First winner for Pena: Twenty-five year-old apprentice rider Pedro Pena earned the first win of his career at Laurel Park in a $33 upset Jan. 16. Frank Vespe covered the milestone.

Passings of 2025: Remembering a few of those who passed in 2025.

Photo Diary – Best of 2025: Photographer Allison Janezic combed through her archives to come up with her favorite shots of 2025.

Charles Town – 10 stories that mattered in 2025: Charles Town correspondent Ted Black revisits 10 stories that mattered at the West Virginia oval in 2025.

Laurel's final stakes of 2025 produced big numbers: Upsets were only part of the story in a pair of juvenile stakes on the final Saturday of the year, reports Vespe.

the earnings title at TMJC-operated tracks with $3,305,880, just ahead of Hazlewood. Brittany Russell also won the fall title at Laurel, part of a Maryland season that included 109 wins at the three tracks, 23 more than Jamie Ness. Kieron Magee (47) finished third. Russell's starters earned $4,111,245 at the TMJC tracks, well clear of Ness with $2,760,970. Married to Sheldon, Brittany Russell is often joined in the winner's circle by their daughter, Edy, and son, Rye. The 36-year-old won eight stakes races during Laurel's fall meet. Madison Avenue, Kernan, and Ness' Jagger stable won the overall in-state race with 26 wins, five more than Joanne Shankle with Larry Rabold (20) third. Zero Blitz led all horses with six wins at the in-state tracks, two for trainer Anthony Farrior and four for Shankle. The Jimmy Creed gelding capped 2025 with a win in the City of Laurel Stakes. Five horses won five races – Bold Diversion, Complexity Jane, Genieinabridle, Neolithica and She's a Gem.

Released

The condition book for its spring meet March 12-14, Virginia's Colonial Downs racetrack. The three-day schedule is highlighted by the $500,000 Virginia Derby and $250,000 Virginia Oaks, points races on the Road to the Kentucky Derby and Road to the Kentucky Oaks, respectively, March 14. The 1⅛-mile Virginia Derby and 1 1/16-mile Virginia Oaks offer 50 points to its winner, while the next four finishers will receive 25, 15, 10 and 5 points. American Promise and Render Judgement, the top two finishers in the 2025 Virginia Derby, participated in the Kentucky Derby. The 1-2 finishers from the 2025 Virginia Oaks, Fondly and Early On, both started in the Kentucky Oaks. Expanded handicap and stakes opportunities for Virginia-restricted and open runners have been added for 2026. Nominations for all stakes and handicap races close Feb. 25 with entries taken one week prior to the run date. For more, see the horsemen section of equibase.com.

Approved

By the Maryland Racing Commission, a 120-day racing schedule for Laurel Park. With Pimlico Race Course under reconstruction, racing conducted by The Maryland Jockey Club will take place at Laurel, including the Preakness Stakes-G1 and its accompanying schedule of major races May 15 and 16. A Friday through Sunday schedule runs during the winter meet, through March 29, as well as the spring/early summer calendar (through June 28) other than dark days on Easter Sunday, April 5, and the day after the Preakness. A holiday card is set for May 25. As in 2025, Laurel will take a summer hiatus in July and August, returning for live racing in September, following the conclusion of the Maryland State Fair meeting at Timonium.

WYN OAKS STALLIONS FOR 2026

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SP WINNER FROM FAMILY OF DISTORTED HUMOR

Hot sire line of INTO MISCHIEF • $109,122 winner in first crop

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FRANKIE'S EMPIRE

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UNDEFEATED IN 5 DIRT SPRINTS incl. SWALE S

12 starts, 5 wins, 3 thirds (all stakes incl. G2 Fountain of Youth)

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WEIGELIA

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Maryland shifts future training center to Laurel Park

The future of Maryland's Thoroughbred industry took another turn in mid-January when the Maryland Stadium Authority issued a letter of intent to pursue the purchase of Laurel Park as a training center.

The move halted an earlier plan to create a training center at Shamrock Farm in Carroll County and essentially reverts to a concept put forward several years ago that preserved the racetracks at Laurel and Baltimore's Pimlico Race Course for training and racing. That two-track plan was deemed too costly, however, and racing was consolidated at Pimlico.

The January change was part of MSA documentation posted on the Maryland General Assembly website before a meeting of the House Appropriations Committee in Annapolis Jan. 21. A training-facility update indicated that the Shamrock project was "not viable due to environmental impacts and excessive costs."

Then under the direction of the Maryland Thoroughbred Racetrack Operating Authority, the training center search included eight potential sites, including Laurel. A December 2024 report narrowed the list to three – Shamrock, the former Bowie Racetrack and a farm in Harford County. On a scoresheet listing various factors, Laurel was ranked fourth of the original eight – with acquisition cost and relative cost of development seen as drawbacks. Upon further study, Shamrock was chosen and the state bought the property for $4.5 million.

The MTROA was dissolved in June 2025, leaving the mission to the MSA, the Maryland Economic Development Corporation and the newly formed non-profit The Maryland Jockey Club which took over day-to-day racing operations from The Stronach Group. Evaluations at Shamrock last year included "environmental, geotechnical, water and septic assessment and interaction with state regulatory authorities," according to the MSA document, and led to the decision to pivot toward Laurel.

Evaluations of Laurel by the MSA and MEDCO last fall produced the January plan which includes all training at Laurel Park, racing at Pimlico, with horses shipping in for racing. The changes will decrease the need for barns and other operational spaces at Pimlico and create more flexibility in the final design.

The *Baltimore Banner* website reported in January that the state was expected to pay about $50 million to The Stronach Group to acquire Laurel, but that the stadium authority expects to save that much in construction costs. The state racing makeover is being funded through the issuing of $400 million in bonds by the MSA and backed by the Thoroughbred industry's share of slots proceeds from Maryland casinos and other funding sources.

The announcement doesn't change much in the immediate future as Laurel will host training and racing, including the Preakness Stakes-G1 and accompanying major races this year. Construction and site preparation will continue at Pimlico, which has been largely demolished. Plans call for the Baltimore track to host the 2027 Preakness, though the MSA listed May 2028 as the scheduled opening of the permanent Pimlico clubhouse as a Preakness host.

Mid-Atlantic-bred Stakes Winners

December 9 – January 12

Maryland-bred

DAZZLING DAME, b.f., 2023, Girvin—Awesome Dama, by Corinthian. B-Maria Haire; O-Respect the Valleys; T-Brittany Russell. $150,000 Busanda S, Aqueduct, Jan. 3.

POST TIME, gr./ro.h., 2020, Frosted—Vielsalm, by Fairbanks. B-Dr. & Mrs. Thomas Bowman, Dr. Brooke Bowman & Milton Higgins III; O-Hillwood Stable; T-Brittany Russell. $100,000 Robert Manfuso S, Laurel, Dec. 20.

SLAM NOTION, b.g., 2022, Great Notion—Balestra, by Grand Slam. B-Eric & Nancy Rizer; O-Eric Rizer; T-W. Robert Bailes. $100,000 Howard and Sondra Bender Memorial S, Laurel, Dec. 20.

TAKETHEMONEYHONEY, dk.b./br.m., 2021, Golden Lad—Goodonehoney, by Great Notion. B/O-Kasey K Racing Stable, Michael Day & Final Turn Racing Stable; T-Michael Moore. $100,000 Politely S, Laurel, Dec. 20.

Pennsylvania-bred

ANGIE'S REWARD, dk.b./br.f., 2023, Warrior's Reward—Awesome Angie, by Awesome Again. B-WynOaks Farm & Warrior's Reward; O-Warrior's Reward; T-Brandon Kulp. $75,000 Miss Behaviour S, Parx, Dec. 30.

MAILATA, b.c., 2023, Maximus Mischief—Bouquet of Gold, by Medaglia d'Oro. B/O-Cash Is King & LC Racing; T-Robert Reid Jr. $75,000 Parx Future Stars S, Parx, Dec. 30.

MAXIMUS MERIDIUS, b.g., 2021, Maximus Mischief—Quiet Virtue, by Quiet American. B-Westerly Farm; O-LC Racing, Cash is King & Wellesley Stable; T-Robert Reid Jr. $75,000 Blitzen S, Parx, Dec. 31.

2026 STALLIONS

ARCANGELO	$30,000
CANDY RIDE	$60,000
NEW FOR 2026 CARL SPACKLER	$15,000
CITY OF LIGHT	$35,000
CONNECT	$10,000
FLIGHTLINE	$125,000
HONOR A. P.	$7,500
LIAM'S MAP	$50,000
MORE THAN LOOKS	$10,000
QUALITY ROAD	$100,000
NEW FOR 2026 RAGING TORRENT	$15,000
SENOR BUSCADOR	$7,500
THE FACTOR	$5,000
TONALIST	$10,000
TWIRLING CANDY	$75,000
UNION RAGS	$10,000
UP TO THE MARK	$25,000

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— Next Chapters —

BY MAGGIE KIMMITT

Tracking

MAGGIE KIMMITT

Winter Paxson and Tracking make a good team with the River Hills Foxhounds.

Royal Ascot has the Windsor Grays. In the Mid-Atlantic, steeplechase racing has the River Hills Foxhounds outriders. Led by the Paxson family – a cadre of immaculately turned-out horsemen on (predominately) gray horses – the squad has become a fixture on the jump racing circuit. And one notable standout over the past several years is the striking dark bay gelding Tracking.

He's not gray, but his roots are royal. Bred in Pennsylvania by Hall of Fame trainer Jonathan Sheppard and owner Bill Pape, the 19-year-old gelding is by Syncline, a stakes-winning son of Danzig trained by Sheppard for George Strawbridge's Augustin Stables. Tracking's female family is all Pape and Sheppard, through dam My Papoose and her predecessors Sultress and Martie's Mad. The latter, a foal of 1966 by Martins Rullah bred in Maryland by Glade Valley Farm, produced steeplechase champion Martie's Anger and Frankie and Johnny, the dam of Maryland Hunt Cup winner Welter Weight among others.

A stakes winner on the turf at Penn National, My Papoose (by Northern Baby) also produced three hurdle stakes performers – winner Pram, graded-placed Tepee Tot and placed Baby League – for Pape and Sheppard. Tracking made both starts in the same blue and white silks, but produced nothing more than a third over hurdles at Parx Racing in 2012.

Soon after, Sheppard contacted the Paxsons and asked if River Hills needed a new staff horse. Perhaps "asked" isn't entirely accurate.

First, Sheppard's then assistant Keri Brion called about sending two horses.

"Let me check," said River Hills' Winter Paxson. "I could take one, but I don't think two. I think we are full."

Then Sheppard called. Paxson reiterated the lack of space.

"No, you don't understand," said Sheppard. "He is coming to you. I can tie him to your mailbox."

Paxson, pregnant with her daughter at the time, stopped that idea and loaded up the van to pick up the horse. Her parents, Elise "Hoppy" duPont Stearns and her husband Clifford Stearns, who died in 2017, laughed about it and made room at the family's 100-acre Whizard's Lair Farm in Conowingo, Md. It's an idyllic setting for family country life with sheep, cows, dogs, cats, horses and a now-45-year-old pony named Missy.

Hoppy Stearns serves as a master at River Hills along with Jimmy Paxson and his nephew Greg, Winter's husband. A few weeks after Tracking's arrival, the family suffered a crushing blow.

"We unexpectedly lost one of our best horses – an incredible outrider, foxhunter, and show jumper," Winter said. "He was irreplaceable in many ways. Tracking quietly stepped into that role and in time became one of the best horses we have ever had."

That happened gradually and with much patience and understanding on the part of his new connections. Quirky and equipped with an "auto-lock braking system," Tracking could spin like a top in any direction.

"But once he trusted you," Winter said, "he gave you everything."

In so doing, Tracking has compiled an inspiring resume. As a River Hills huntsman's horse, he is ridden by Greg Paxson or their 15-year-old son Clayton. As a whip's horse, he'll partner with Greg, Clayton, Hoppy or Winter. As an outrider's mount at National Steeplechase Association sanctioned races and point-to-points, he has several duties: leads in the box, start horse, pickup horse and pony horse.

His talents aren't limited to the hunt field or race meets. Tracking is equally as accomplished in the show ring – as are most of the Paxson/River Hills horses. He's a past winner of the foxhunting team class at the historic Devon Horse Show, where he has also placed second and third in the family class. He's placed sixth, seventh and eighth on hunt night at the Pennsylvania National Horse Show at Harrisburg.

Perhaps most significantly, Tracking is a family horse in every sense. He's literally been a Paxson longer than Winter and Greg's daughter Willow, 11, and younger son Lane, now 8. And he's bringing them up right. Willow rides him on the farm, and Lane takes him on trail rides. He has competed in local shows with all three kids. And according to Winter, Tracking loves those kids. They're right at the top of his list of favorite things – along with "being ridden – he stands at the gate waiting to be taken out," carrots and horse cookies, hunting, outriding and getting on the trailer.

"Tracking quietly stepped into that role and in time became one of the best horses we have ever had."

– Winter Paxson

Is there anything he doesn't like? Standing in his stall. Standing on cross ties. Being braided ("he finds this strangely annoying") and, somewhat oddly, apples.

Tracking lives the life of a professional athlete, and he looks every inch the part – lean, fit and sharp. His typical day starts with breakfast at 7:30 and turnout time afterward until schooling or hacking time. He'll do light ring work twice a week, hack the hills and jog the roads. He gets a light lunch mid-day, followed by more field time, "usually bossing the other horses around." Dinner is at 3:45.

He stood patiently for photos for a few minutes before taking a keen interest in the sheep in the nearby field who had come to the fenceline to check out the activity.

As Winter explained, "He does round up cows and the occasional flock of sheep."

The Paxson family is always happy to introduce people to foxhunting, outriding and racing. "We have people come through the barns and we love to help bring them along. This has been our lives for years."

The River Hills outriders are a diverse group, including an anesthesiologist, an osteopath, a surgical technician and a real-estate agent. All volunteer for the love of the horse and the sport.

"This year, you'll see Tracking at point-to-points, NSA meets, and a few local horse shows – still doing his job, still loving his people, and still being the horse everyone counts on," Winter said. "Tracking is the kind of horse that teaches you what versatility, heart, and generosity really mean. From the racetrack to the hunt field, from outriding to teaching kids, he has done it all without ever losing his personality." ■

— From the editor —

BY JOE CLANCY

O'Brien carved niche in racing

Afterlife Downs must be having some Thoroughbred meet. Within a few weeks of each other this winter, former jockeys Vince Bracciale Jr., Diane Crump, Gregg McCarron and Leo O'Brien died.

All four had Mid-Atlantic ties and, though their careers ended years ago, all made impacts.

West Virginia native and longtime Marylander Bracciale won 3,545 races, and teamed up with the likes of Ruffian, Broad Brush and Dave's Friend. Virginia resident Crump was the first woman to ride in the Kentucky Derby. Born in Massachusetts but long defined as a Marylander, McCarron rode 2,403 winners including On the Sly, Mom's Command and Before Dawn. He also helped nurture the Hall of Fame riding career of his brother Chris and was the father of two-time champion steeplechase jockey Matt McCarron. Obituaries for the trio appear on page 55.

An Irishman who eventually settled in New York, O'Brien didn't get an obit back there with the others – mostly because his regional connection went a little less deep – but there's no doubting his importance. O'Brien rode on the National Steeplechase Association circuit in the 1960s and 1970s while also riding out for some of the biggest names in Thoroughbred racing – Rokeby Stable, Sidney Watters Jr., LeRoy Jolley for starters.

In April 1964, O'Brien rode his first American winner – in his first try – as a seven-pound apprentice in a maiden hurdle at the Middleburg Spring Races in Virginia. He and mount *My Passion, owned by Raymond Guest's Powhatan stable and trained by E.A. Drinkwater, won twice more at Aqueduct that spring and O'Brien finished the year with 10 wins. The total fell to five in 1965, but O'Brien stuck it out and won at least 10 races in each of the next 11 seasons. He finished with 141 lifetime wins over jumps to earn a spot on the NSA's career leaderboard between Rigan McKinney and Robert "Specs" Crawford.

O'Brien never won a seasonal championship, though he made the top-three on four occasions, finished in the top seven nine times and watched his brother Michael win the crown in 1972.

Leo's 1971 season may have been his best, as he finished second to future Hall of Famer Jerry Fishback and was the regular rider of champion Shadow Brook. Trained by Watters

for Stephen Clark Jr., Shadow Brook opened with a second in the Meadowbrook at Aqueduct in July. Two weeks later at Saratoga, he won Lovely Night Handicap over future champion Soothsayer despite conceding 17 pounds. Back for more in the American Grand National at Saratoga, Shadow Brook dominated 1970 champion Top Bid by a dozen lengths. O'Brien and his charge made it three in a row with a September win in the Brook Handicap at Belmont Park, yielding 24 pounds to runner-up Amarind. Shadow Brook won once more, with Fishback aboard, in the Temple Gwathmey as O'Brien had to honor a commitment to Powhatan runner Smooth Dealer (Ire) from overseas. In the season-ending Colonial Cup, O'Brien and Shadow Brook settled for fourth, after being second the year before, but claimed the championship. O'Brien and the son of Cohoes won seven races together. Other standouts ridden by O'Brien included Attribution, Gran Kan (Chi), Augustus Bay, National Anthem, Mako and Tall Award.

O'Brien stopped riding races in 1976, went back to Ireland to train alongside Michael and returned to the U.S. in 1981 with a single horse. You probably know the rest of the story.

That one horse, Sports Reporter (Ire), won four times over jumps and once on the flat and launched O'Brien's American training career. In a time before super-sized stables, O'Brien went on to condition New York-bred legend Fourstardave, who won at least one race at Saratoga Race Course each year from 1987-94 and is honored with a Grade 1 stakes at the track each summer. His trainer routinely presented the trophy.

The former jump jockey also trained champion Yanks Music and millionaire Grade 2 winner Irish Linnet and found a place in the New York training ranks. O'Brien made history in 1991 when Fourstars Allstar, Fourstardave's full-brother, landed the Irish Two Thousand Guineas-G1 at The Curragh to become the first American-based horse to win a European classic.

Over time, O'Brien's stable shrunk and he saddled his last runners in 2020 – 56 years after those first U.S. jump rides. In between, he partnered with remarkable horses, raised a family (daughter Leona is married to Hall of Fame jockey John Velazquez, son Keith works for the National Steeplechase Association, and granddaughters Darby and Jacinta are pursuing careers in racing) and left an impact on the game. ■

Star Power

MID-ATLANTIC STANDOUTS OF 2025 HEAD OFF IN ALL DIRECTIONS

by Joe Clancy

Go about comparing eras, or even years, in Thoroughbred racing and you can quickly find yourself doing mental jumping jacks. If Horse A in Year X was really better than Horse B in Year Y, does all this mean anything? And what about Horse C and Year Z? Well . . . he did this and she did that, which means they would have won these and not those and – hey, let's start over.

The 2025 racing season produced more than its share of Mid-Atlantic highlights and headliners on stages local and national. There were championship contenders, local legends, out-of-towners, sprinters and steeplechasers. The only constant through it all was quality. The 2025 group would stand up against most any other, and there's no debate after taking a short trip to check on many of the year's best.

Mindframe

Tracy Mulroy found an article quoting her father, successful Mid-Atlantic owner/breeder R. Larry Johnson who died in February 2025, about the potential of Mindframe, a horse he bred and sold for $600,000 as a yearling.

"He said something like, 'Boy if Mindframe would win a Grade 1, that would be incredible for the rest of the family on the farm,' " Mulory said. "I never sensed any regret from him, even when Mindframe almost won the Belmont Stakes. He would be amazed by it. He bred a horse who stands at Claiborne Farm."

Racing for Repole Stable and St. Elias Stables, Mindframe got his Grade 1 and then some, in 2025 with wins in the Gulfstream Park Mile-G2 in March, the Churchill Downs Stakes-G1 and Stephen Foster Stakes-G1 for trainer Todd Pletcher. Looking for a big finish before starting his stud career, the Maryland-bred son of Constitution lost jockey Irad Ortiz Jr. at the start of the Jockey Club Gold Cup-G1 in August and finished fifth in the Breeders' Cup Classic-G1 in November. The oddball ending cost him some sentences in the Older Dirt Male championship conversation – and a chance at Horse of the Year – but did nothing to diminish the opinion of those around him.

"He's in Stall One, that's Bold Ruler, Secretariat and Easy Goer," said Claiborne's Jacob West in January. "Those are big shoes to fill, but the expectations for him were always very high. Buying him and getting him to the farm was the first thing. Once we secured him, it was putting him a position like this to attract mares. He's booked full already. People see the race record, they see who he's by, they see the family and once they come and see him they fall in love with him."

Standing for $50,000, Mindframe will breed 175-180 mares this year, West said, and if early indications mean anything he'll take to stallion life as well as he did racing.

"It's a big change from the racetrack to the farm," said West. "There are some horses that it takes a while for them to figure out they have their own paddock and can drop their heads and relax for a bit. He would be the furthest from that. You could detonate a bomb next to him and he wouldn't care. His mind sets him apart from a lot of other horses – smart horse, he's made it easy. He enjoys the farm life, he's settled in beautifully. We've test bred him a few times and he's gotten the hang of that. He'll cover a great group of mares and we're excited."

Keeping the connection to the horse, and their father, Mulroy and her sister Kelly Caraballo bought a share and will send two mares to a horse whose female family is one of the Mid-Atlantic's most important. Johnson bought Mindframe's

Maryland-bred Mindframe has adapted to life as a stallion at Kentucky's Claiborne Farm.

fourth dam Ran's Chick for $2,400 as a 2-year-old in 1978. She never raced, but became the foundation broodmare for a racing/breeding operation now in its sixth decade.

Mulroy said finding suitable mares for Mindframe became an unintended challenge as much of the broodmare population at Legacy Farm in Virginia hails from the same family. Stakes winners Street Lute, purchased by Johnson in 2024, and Spun Glass, a homebred from a different line, head to Claiborne for dates with the dark bay earner of $2 million.

"When they were selling shares in Mindframe, one of the first things I did was look them up," said Mulroy. "We only have a couple who aren't in that family. It's really, really crazy to think about."

Future Is Now

A multiple graded stakes winner and Maryland-bred champion, new broodmare Future Is Now won't go to Mindframe – they share a third dam in Special Kell – but might be headed to the next best thing in Constitution. Mindframe's sire placed among the top five on the general sires list in 2024 and 2025 and has produced the likes of classic winner Tiz the Law and Grade 1 winner Americanrevolution among a growing reputation.

Mulroy and Caraballo enlisted the help of Mill Ridge Farm's Headley Bell as an advisor on matings and have added to their knowledge base thanks to his insights. Bell came to the farm, looked at the mares, helped create a list of horses to sell, answered questions and provided advice on stallions with various rankings. Somewhere, Johnson is smiling at the systematic approach. For whatever reason, his was a little more free-flowing

"Our dad went more on 100-percent gut feel, but if we were going to rely on our gut feels we were going to have a big problem," said Mulroy. "He was so knowledgeable and had good

Mid-Atlantic Poll

The final Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred/The Racing Biz poll of regional-bred Thoroughbreds for 2025.

Rank	Horse (State foaled)	Pts
1	Mindframe (Md.)	115
2	Book'em Danno (N.J.)	98
3	Splendora (Md.)	97
4	Seismic Beauty (Md.)	75
5	Barbadian Runner (Md.)	71
6	Future Is Now (Md.)	61
7	Post Time (Md.)	49
8	Kappa Kappa (Pa.)	26
	Simply Joking (Pa.)	26
10	Quint's Brew (Md.)	14

Others receiving votes: Slam Notion (Md.), Teachintherelease (W.Va.), Maskedandmummed (W.Va.), Maximus Meridius (Pa.), Keys Discount (Md.), Just Philtored (Md.), Slewperstitus (Md.).

Poll of media members and others in the Thoroughbred industry restricted to 2025 starters bred in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, New Jersey, Delaware and the Carolinas.

instincts for it. It's been extremely educational learning about first-year sires, how horses fit certain mares, all of it."

A daughter of Maryland stallion Great Notion, Future Is Now won three of four starts (with a second) in 2025 and was scratched by a regulatory veterinarian before what was to be her final start at Keeneland in October. The curveball bit, but Mulroy is over it and looks forward to seeing her foals.

"That was always most likely going to be her last race and that's why it was extra upsetting that she got scratched," Mulroy said. "She was in peak form, to give her the winter off and bring her back next year was asking a lot. She doesn't owe us anything."

A five-time winner and earner of $513,155 in 2024, Future Is Now was just as good in 2025 – opening with a win in the Giant's Causeway-G3 at Keeneland in April. She ran three times at Saratoga – a second (by a half-length) in the Intercontinental-G2 in June and wins in the Caress-G3 and Smart and Fancy in July and August. She won seven of her final nine starts, with a second and a third, while finishing with $967,160 in career earnings.

"What a race record, there are a whole lot of ones there and when she lost it wasn't by much; she never threw a clunker," said Mulroy. "Everybody has their favorites, but she's one. We have amazing memories with our dad because 2024 was spent following Future Is Now around with him. She's a special horse."

Book'em Danno

Look at the numbers – 16 starts, 10 wins, rather routine three-digit speed figures – sprint star Book'em Danno exudes ability. But an intangible might be the biggest factor in his success.

"His will to win," trainer Derek Ryan replied – without hesitation – when asked what makes his horse so good. "Really."

You going to argue? The New Jersey-bred could easily be 12-for-16 or even better with a narrow loss to international standout Forever Young (Jpn) in the 2024 Saudi Derby-G3, a second in the 2023 Nashua, a second in the 2024 Perryville-G3 and a tight fourth (beaten a neck by Mindframe) in the 2025 Churchill Downs-G1 among the past performances. Owned by Atlantic Six Racing, the son of Bucchero won four of five starts in 2025 – a three-horse handicap at Colonial Downs in March, and consecutive scores in the True North-G3, Alfred Vanderbilt-G2 and Forego-G1 at Saratoga, all at 7 furlongs or shorter.

The report card earned him a finalist nod for the Eclipse Award as champion male sprinter, even though his connections opted against a start at the Breeders' Cup at Del Mar in California. There were reasons to run, and plenty more to bypass the opportunity.

"I'm glad I didn't go," said Ryan. "It went like I said – speed-favoring track, shorter stretch. How are you going to close on a speed-favoring track? It was the right call. I know pundits said we needed to go, but it's supposed to be your body of work and he had some body of work. When I look back on it I say, 'How did I even make three races in Saratoga?' It's tough, especially there. Every race was good. It's not like we ducked anybody, and the race we lost at Churchill was a good race."

Bred by Greg Kilka and Bright View Farm, Book'em Danno worked twice at Monmouth Park after the Forego but then took a lengthy vacation. After some time at Hennessy Hill Training Center in Florida, the now 5-year-old gelding returned to Ryan's winter base at Tampa Bay Downs in January. This year, there's a November goal.

"Basically, we've got to figure out how to get to the Breeders' Cup in Keeneland," said Ryan, who looked to April or May as a return but wouldn't rule out a start before the Tampa meet ends. "How I get there, we'll see. He won't be running three times in Saratoga. He'll have a three- or four-race schedule to get to the Breeders' Cup. He had a long year, needed the break. He got bigger and stronger if that's possible."

Atlantic Six – managed by Jay Briscione but including Jeff, Mark and Jim Rubenstein, Jeff Resnikoff, Jim Scappi and Frank Camassa – spent $30,000 to buy Book'em Danno privately as a yearling through agent Chris Gracie in 2022. Kilka

SAMANTHA DECKER

Book'em Danno gets a bath after his Vanderbilt Stakes win at Saratoga last summer.

paid $14,000 for broodmare Adorabella (carrying future stakes winner Girl Trouble) in 2020, bred her to Bucchero the next year and sold her (in foal to Medaglia d'Oro) for $550,000 in 2023.

Meanwhile, Book'em Danno continues to make everyone look smart even if he didn't tout his ability from the beginning.

"He's not the prettiest mover you've ever seen, so you wouldn't say he had this in front of him," said Ryan of his first impression. "He's just a stone-cold freak. They come along once in awhile."

Post Time

Emma Wolfe once bought Post Time a stuffed cow for company in the stall. He destroyed it in four hours. He's tried to bite her, kick her, buck her off, run out of the stall, get sick, lose his shoes, gallop through parking lots, walk on his hind legs – and succeeded at most of them – but she's going to miss him.

In late December, trainer Brittany Russell's assistant and Post Time's exercise rider spent a few final days with the Maryland-bred at Fair Hill Training Center in Cecil County, Md. His racing career ended with a stakes win at Laurel Park three days earlier to put a bow on a 23-13-4-5 record with $1,558,705 in lifetime earnings.

A van would arrive in a few days to take him to his next career, as a stallion at Northview Stallion Station in Chesapeake City. With a fee of $4,000, the son of Frosted is the most accomplished home-grown horse to retire to stud in the region since Breeders' Cup Classic-G1 winner Concern went to Northview after the 1995 season.

The statistics matter for sure, but Post Time was always about more than numbers to Wolfe. During that morning at Fair Hill, she fed the now 6-year-old a mint, slapped him

MAGGIE KIMMITT

Post Time and Emma Wolfe share a moment at Fair Hill Training Center.
The Maryland-bred $1.5 million earner is off to stud at Northview Stallion Station.

on the neck, traced the various lines of gray, white and black through his coat and thought about their time together.

"Riding him was my favorite part of the day, seriously," she said of a daily ritual of lunging, plunging, rearing, striking and bucking on the way to the track, followed by a comparatively sedate gallop and calm walk back to the barn. "He doesn't do anything maliciously, and he doesn't want to get me off. A couple of times he knocked me off, he turned and looked at me like, 'Why are you down there? You're supposed to be up here.' So he does it because he's feeling good."

Which might be the best part about Post Time, a racehorse who loved his job and told everybody about it – all the time. He won eight of his first nine races, topped by scores in the General George-G3 and Carter-G2. He placed in three Grade 1 stakes – the Metropolitan Handicap and Whitney at Saratoga and the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile at Del Mar. At home in Maryland, he lost once in 13 starts, a second to Barbadian Runner in the 2025 Maryland Million Classic.

Wolfe called the Breeders' Cup trip her favorite moment, even though he couldn't catch Full Serrano (Arg).

"Hopefully it's not once in a lifetime, but it was Brittany's first, and it was my first," she said. "He finished second, but it showed the world that he actually belonged."

On cue, Post Time edged a few steps toward the door like he could escape to visit with barn mascot Gomez the pig, say hello to the chickens across the way or meet that van to Northview out on the road.

"No you don't," Wolfe told him, then shut the screen. "You can't go anywhere just yet. You're going to love it there, but you get to stay for a few more days."

Kappa Kappa

A $65,000 yearling purchase by LC Racing at Fasig-Tipton Midlantic in 2023, Kappa Kappa followed a familiar Mid-Atlantic script as Cash is King joined the ownership list and she entered the stable of trainer Butch Reid at Parx Racing.

JOHN GALLAGHER / COADY MEDIA

Pennsylvania-bred filly Kappa Kappa (black silks), a Grade 2 winner at Keeneland in October, eyes lofty goals in 2026.

Unraced at 2, the Pennsylvania-bred won her debut at Parx (by 9¾ lengths) in July 2025, finished second in August and graduated the allowance ranks in a 6-length romp in September.

Then she rewrote everything. Entered in Keeneland's 7-furlong Raven Run Stakes-G2 in October, she got stuck on the also-eligible list and was likely staying home until scratches started piling up from the main entry list.

"She only shipped down there two days before the race, had a 12- or 13-hour trip, so she didn't get a chance to train there or settle in for a few days," said Reid. "That was a day where it was going to be a big crowd and a lot of commotion. They get a little bit bigger crowd than we normally have at Parx so I wasn't sure how she would handle it."

Composed as a judge stating jury instructions, she fought for the lead while outside early, got headed by Vodka With a Twist in the stretch, switched leads late and prevailed by a head – all at 27-1.

"It's always a little surprising when they win at a big price, but I saw her in the paddock and she looked spectacular; she never turned a hair," said Reid. "She's a really, really nice filly, one we've got big ideas for. We'll go one at a time and see where we end up."

Reid tried Aqueduct's 1⅛-mile Comely-G3 in December, but Kappa Kappa weakened late and finished sixth before earning a winter vacation at Eisaman Equine in Florida.

"She's soaking up some sun, eating some grass, all those things you want them do when they can," Reid said. "It's nice to get her out of this weather up here for a while. We wanted to try her long and she didn't fare so well. I still haven't given up on that, but for now she's maybe better at 7 furlongs or a one-turn mile."

EQUI-PHOTO, INC. (2)

Trainer Butch Reid's Pennsylvania-bred stars include 3-year-old Mailata (left) and 5-year-old multiple stakes winner Maximus Meridius.

Bred by Stone Jug Ranch, the chestnut daughter of Omaha Beach and the Pioneerof the Nile mare Pharoah's Princess didn't sell as a yearling at Keeneland September in 2023 but sold a month later near the end of the catalog at Timonium.

Mailata

Staying in the Reid barn, Cash is King and LC Racing homebred Mailata attracted attention from the start, and that didn't change through five starts as a 2-year-old. Mailata, named for star Philadelphia Eagles offensive lineman Jordan, closed 2025 with back-to-back stakes wins and was likely headed to New York for his 3-year-old debut.

His namesake, a 6-foot-8, 365-pound left tackle, was born in Australia and played rugby before getting selected in the seventh round of the 2018 NFL draft. Thought of as a practice-squad player and long-term project, he rose through the ranks and has been a starter since 2021. He made an all-pro team, signed two contracts worth $60 million and won a Super Bowl after the 2024 season.

Like a first-round draft pick, Mailata the horse flashed ability from the beginning, even if he created some problems for himself.

"He's been pretty precocious from day one," said Reid. "He's a big, tall horse, who looks like he's got some range. The first start he got loose in the paddock and I thought he was going to jump the paddock fence. We chased him around for 15 minutes, then he got loose behind the gate."

Mailata finished third in that start in August, and fourth a month later after dropping far behind early in a field of 12. Trying to force some attention to detail, Reid added blinkers for the third start and got rewarded with a professional 2½-length win going a mile in October.

"A lot of times that sharpens them up and I didn't really want that, but with him they seemed to really settle him down," the trainer said. "It improved his concentration. He was much better."

Off the maiden win, Mailata won the Pennsylvania Nursery against state-breds Nov. 26 by 3½ lengths and pancaked two foes by 19 lengths in the Parx Future Stars Dec. 30. Both stakes wins came at 7 furlongs and, combined with the mile maiden win, Reid looks forward to trying longer distances in time – perhaps in the Gotham-G3 Feb. 28.

"I haven't seen any limits as far as distance goes," Reid said, "but he'll get asked those questions here soon enough."

Reid trained Mailata's sire Maximus Mischief, who won his first three and finished third in the 2019 Holy Bull-G3 before being retired to Spendthrift Farm, for Cash is King and LC. Dam Bouquet of Gold produced two foals for Dan Ryan's Smart Angle stable before changing owners. Daughter Jeanne Marie, a foal of 2021, won a stakes for Cash is King and LC. A 2-year-old full-brother to Mailata – name to be determined, but Kelce is taken – is part of a large group training in Florida.

Maximus Meridius

Mailata's 5-year-old stablemate Maximus Meridius could be headed to New York for his 2026 debut. He made the most of 2025, winning four of eight beginning with the Toboggan at Aqueduct in February and ending with the Blitzen at Parx on New Year's Eve.

RICK BUCKLEY

Maryland-bred Slam Notion digs in late to win the Maryland Million Sprint. The son of Great Notion won his last three starts in 2025.

The son of Maximus Mischief finished the season with $644,430 in career earnings fueled by four stakes wins. His four graded stakes tries have yet to produce a win or a placing, but he might get more chances. The Feb. 28 Tom Fool-G3 could be on the docket.

"We gelded him in 2024, and it took a while but he's better now," said Reid. "He still had a bad habit of kind of waiting on horses. Every jockey that came back said he was waiting or wouldn't go on. Mychel Sanchez seems to really have his number. His last race was really good, and he's not that far off some of the better horses. We'll travel lightly with him and see where he goes."

Slam Notion

Stop by the barn of trainer Robbie Bailes at Laurel Park and you'll see and hear plenty of horses. You might not notice Slam Notion, however.

"He's like a pony, just one of those horses who sits back and does his thing," Bailes said in January. "I've had some good ones and you know they're there every morning. Him, you would have no clue."

On the racetrack, they know him. Bred and owned by Eric and Nancy Rizer, the now 4-year-old son of Great Notion and the Grand Slam mare Balestra won six races in 2025 and rode a three-race winning streak into the new year with eyes on the 7-furlong General George this month. Off a December win in the Howard and Sondra Bender over older top handicap sprinter Quint's Brew, Bailes skipped January's 1-mile Jennings (won by Quint's Brew) in favor of a lighter schedule.

"It looks like he likes that 45-day, 60-day schedule," said Bailes. "It's hard to skip a race here and there because you never know what might happen, but the Rizers have been great and it's worked out for him."

Slam Notion broke his maiden in his second start, in December 2024. Allowance wins at Laurel in February and March sent him to stakes and he won the Star de Naskra (over Barbadian Runner) at Colonial Downs in July before an allowance win at the Virginia track in September. The

Maryland Hunt Cup winner Road to Oz, bred in Maryland by Larry Johnson, and trainer Mark Beecher will use some foxhunting sessions with the Elkridge-Harford Hounds for early fitness before the spring races.

bay gelding put a bow on 2025 with scores in the Maryland Million Sprint and then the Bender.

The success didn't necessarily surprise Bailes, though he wasn't making predictions early.

"I thought he had a shot to win a stakes, but would I have told you he was going to do what he did throughout the year? Heck no," Bailes said. "He's just gotten better and better. That's something you hope for, but you never can count on."

Road to Oz, Master Seville, Keys Discount

Mid-Atlantic-breds won the National Steeplechase Association's most prestigious timber races in 2025, headed by Maryland-bred Road to Oz's score in the Maryland Hunt Cup. Not to be outdone, Pennsylvania-bred Master Seville landed the Pennsylvania Hunt Cup. Maryland-bred Keys Discount shook up the state lines with a victory in the Virginia Gold Cup as part of a 5-for-5 campaign that included four other stakes triumphs and the NSA's timber championship.

All were bred to be flat horses, with Road to Oz actually winning a race for breeder Larry Johnson and trainer Mike Trombetta at Laurel before selling and changing careers. Keys Discount lost four times at Laurel Park, but did manage a second at 43-1 before heading to jumps. Master Seville, bred and still owned by South Branch Equine, never started on the flat but boasts six wins over jumps.

The success helped prove the capabilities of American Thoroughbreds in programs routinely filled by European imports, but the horses don't seem to care.

Road to Oz was cranking up for his 11-year-old season with some foxhunting. A day out involves exercise and some minor mind games.

"As long as the ground is good, he hunts away," said Beecher of the Quality Road gelding. "He's an easygoing horse so he's

a bit lazy in doing extra work. He enjoys the hunting, so it gets him to do a little more and it's a good way to get more fitness into him before we push the button."

The gray hunts for about two hours, depending on how much running the hounds do. The point of January work is overall fitness. The real exercise starts later and will culminate with prep races at the Green Spring Valley Point-to-Point and My Lady's Manor and then a go at a Hunt Cup repeat.

"You'd be silly to try and change it," Beecher said of the schedule. "I'm very happy with him now. He's full of himself and feeling good. I've seen some horses after the Hunt Cup go back into their shell. He kind of came out of his shell. I remember thinking that if we really wanted to run him in the fall we could have, but why would you? He's 11 years of age, but he's an easy enough 11. Hopefully there's plenty more left in the tank."

A year younger than his stablemate, Master Seville progressed through the timber ranks to November's Pennsylvania Hunt Cup win. The son of late Maryland stallion Seville (Ger) didn't finish three of his first four races in 2021 and won twice each in 2022 and 2023. He pulled up and fell in his only two NSA starts in 2024 and won twice in 2025.

"He deserved to win a stakes, because he's beaten plenty of stake horses in the other races," Beecher said. "He may go the Grand National this year, he's won himself out of the apprentice races."

Beecher enjoys the relationship with owner Ann Kinsley, whose late husband Bob was the driving force behind their racing involvement. When he died in 2020, she scaled back but kept several horses and has found success with Beecher and trainer/jockey Sean McDermott.

"When Bob passed away, she said to us that this wasn't her thing and she didn't know much about the horses but she was willing to carry on with six or seven," Beecher said. "Master Seville didn't finish three of his first four sanctioned races. She said she was willing to stay on with him if I thought he was all right. Then he went on a tear. She's enjoying it and following along with the horses. It's nice that they're staying involved because they've bred nice horses. She won a Pennsylvania Hunt Cup with a horse she bred. How many people can say that?"

A few miles away at Jack Fisher's training base, Keys Discount ponders a way to improve upon a perfect 2025 – or his people do. The championship campaign started at Middleburg in April, went to the Virginia Gold Cup in May, Shawan Downs in September, Middleburg again in mid-October and back for more at Great Meadow in the International Gold Cup two weeks later. Each was a win, each fairly easy and the last two by 10 lengths each.

Bred by Bryan Minnich, Keys Discount sold for $2,000 at Timonium as a yearling, and lost eight combined starts on the flat and over hurdles. The son of Medal Count has won six of eight over timber.

Simply Joking

Last year's plan for Simply Joking was the Cotillion Stakes-G1 at Parx Racing, where it would have been fun to bring a Pennsylvania-bred to the state's richest race for 3-year-old fillies. She sent that idea to the recycle bin after two solid stakes wins to launch her career, a big swing at the Kentucky Oaks-G1 in May and then an extended rest with an injury and surgery to remove a bone chip.

But she's back for more in 2026.

Bred by Larry Karp's Barlar program, producer of standout Pennsylvania-breds Imply (Simply Joking's dam), Vault and Bound plus former regional stallion E Dubai, Simply Joking took a roundabout route to her current home with Grantley Acres and partners and trainer Michael McCarthy. After foaling in the Keystone State, she boarded at Kentucky's Grantley Acres for Karp and advisor Carl McEntee of Ballysax Bloodstock and eventually went to Keeneland September as a yearling in 2023. Her dam, a daughter of E Dubai, was a Pennsylvania-bred star – winning a dozen races and earning $772,728 for Karp and trainer Bernie Houghton while making 26 of 30 starts in her home state. Imply's first foal, by Hard Spun, is Drum Roll Please – a $250,000 yearling.

Held back by some X-ray issues, Simply Joking wasn't going to bring that but sold to Grantley Acres for $65,000.

"She was raised here for a short time, so we knew her," said Geoff Nixon, a Texan who bought his first horse in 2014 and has since branched into racing and breeding with a farm in Versailles, Ky. "I love Practical Joke and thought she was worth taking the risk on. If she didn't make the races, she'd be a broodmare prospect."

The purchase looked smarter when Drum Roll Please won a maiden race and placed in the Remsen-G2 late in his 2-year-old season and won the Jerome to start his 3-year-old campaign in 2024. The staff at Grantley Acres prepped Simply Joking, got her over some of the issues and – sent to trainer Whit Beckman – she broke her maiden in a stakes at Fair Grounds in December 2024. She added the Silverbulletday Stakes to start 2025 and then finished second, three-quarters of a length behind Quietside, in the Fantasy-G2 at Oaklawn Park.

Next stop Kentucky Oaks.

"We turned down, stupidly, *a lot* of money for her a week before the Oaks," said Nixon. "We were there and it was the

week of the race. I didn't think we could beat Good Cheer, but it's horse racing and you've got to throw mud at the wall sometimes. It might stick."

It didn't. On a wet fast track, Simply Joking broke from post two of 13, pulled early and finished last at 9-1 as Good Cheer won. Worse, Simply Joking went to the sidelines with a bone chip and, after surgery, didn't race again until October as Nixon sent her to McCarthy's barn with eyes on a West Coast campaign. Ninth in the comebacker in the Raven Run-G2 at Keeneland won by Kappa Kappa, she placed in two California graded stakes to end the year, including the Grade 1 La Brea. Nixon likes what he sees, and will hope for a big 2026 with the filly whose owners include longtime friend Ryan Conner and Nixon's mother and stepfather.

HANNAH JENNINGS

Maryland-bred Seismic Beauty enjoys some winter weather at Kentucky's Killora Stud.

In the meantime, Grantley Acres bought Imply and added her to the broodmare band. The 13-year-old, whose dam Allude cost Barlar $17,000 in 2011, is in foal to Nyquist.

"It's a nice full-circle thing," said Nixon. "She was on the farm as a foal, and what our staff did here really helped her become what she's become. I remember Carl calling me and saying she was a good physical, but that she had some X-ray issues. We call her SJ and we're very proud of her."

Seismic Beauty

She wears her Maryland-bred credentials well, but Seismic Beauty may never set foot in her home state again – and that's just fine. Bred by Matt Dorman's 2500 Determined Stud, the daughter of Uncle Mo sold for $400,000 as a weanling and changed hands again for $550,000 as a yearling.

Racing for MyRacehorse, Peter Leidel and trainer Bob Baffert, she won three times in 2025 topped by a Grade 1 score in the Clement L. Hirsch Stakes at Del Mar. Eleventh in the Breeders' Cup Distaff as the favorite, she went to the sales ring once more and this time rolled up to $2.5 million on a bid by Boyd Racing. New owners Jenny and Randy Boyd could have put her right into a blossoming broodmare program, that includes the 2025 purchase of Grade 1 winner Vahva, but Seismic Beauty headed back to Baffert in January to start a 2026 campaign.

"Physically, we think she's going to improve a lot, and we love the Uncle Mo sire line as a potential broodmare," said Brittany Linton, the Boyds' racing manager. "Randy and Jenny are fairly new to the game, and they want to keep a boutique stable. They're really excited to be part of it, they're willing to learn and are along for the ride."

After the sale in November, Seismic Beauty went to Kentucky's Killora Stud of Hannah and Aidan Jennings for a break from the track. She put on weight, went through bone scans and X-rays, got turned out daily, played in the snow and otherwise made herself at home.

"She's very, very sweet," said Hannah Jennings. "My 2- and 3-year-old daughters, Ella and Sophie, got to sit on her back when we fed her at night."

Seismic Beauty will have other jockeys soon enough, with plenty of opportunities in California.

"I hate to say it, but we were just looking for a good horse," Linton said about whether being a Maryland-bred made any difference. "She's running in California so it wouldn't matter if she was a Kentucky-bred or anything else either. She's a good horse, no matter where she was bred."

Rounding Up

You could fill an entire magazine with vignettes about the stars of 2025. **Barbadian Runner**, off a standout 3-year-old campaign for Scott Groh and Henry Walters, will return to see if he can take Post Time's spot among the Maryland-breds . . . Maryland-bred filly **Dazzling Dame** tossed her fascinator into the early Kentucky Oaks-G1 conversation with a win in the Busanda at Aqueduct Jan. 3. The daughter of Girvin, bred by Maria Haire, won three of four (two stakes) in 2025 for Respect the Valleys and the Russell barn . . . Another California-based Maryland-bred, **Splendora** was an Eclipse finalist in two divisions, champion female sprinter and older dirt female, after taking the Breeders' Cup Filly and Mare Sprint-G1 for By Talla Racing and Baffert. Bred by The Elkstone Group, the daughter of Audible closed 2025 with three consecutive wins and was working toward a 2026 debut… Maryland-bred **Quint's Brew** opened 2025 with wins in the Jennings and General George, placed in two graded stakes in New York but didn't race between May 4 and Dec. 20. Second in his return at the end of the year, the 5-year-old Mosler gelding won the 2026 Jennings Jan. 17– and eyed even bigger challenges – for trainer Ned Allard and breeders Paul Berube, Karen Linnell and Heather Hunter. ■

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New Direction

WINLESS ON TRACK, WV-BRED VESTAL'S GAP FINDS SUCCESS AT MAKEOVER

by Ella Barnett

"I literally bought the horse in like an hour." That's what Jody Marken said about Vestal's Gap, a West Virginia-bred gelding whose racing career included just three starts – all losses.

Marken is the owner and trainer of Two Spruce Farm, a natural horsemanship program in Colorado specializing in obstacle-based training.

"It's opening up for some people a new avenue for them to be able to connect with their horse and work with their horse to improve their relationship," Marken said of her program. "We use the obstacles to help with the horsemanship part, and it has been a very big success. It's a pretty big program here."

Operating since 1996, Two Spruce Farm attracts all types of horses and riders. From dressage to the jumper ring, those looking to seek a deeper connection come to Marken and her crew of trainers for help. Marken paid credit to one of those trainers, Nathan Bowers, for the success of Vestal's Gap at the Retired Racehorse Project's Thoroughbred Makeover at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington last fall. A champion in the Competitive Trail division and reserve in Ranch Work, Vestal's Gap found success after basically flunking out as a racehorse in 2024.

Bred and owned by Sterbenz Racing, the son of Bullsbay and the Stephen Got Even mare Ransom Past Due finished seventh at Mahoning Valley Oct. 30, third at Mountaineer Racetrack Nov. 6 and fifth at that track Nov. 20. Combined, he lost those three races by 58 lengths.

Unimpressed with the results, trainer Jay Bernardini sold him to Jen Ruberto's Ohio-based Wire to Wire Sport Horses, which specializes in new careers for ex-racehorses.

Wire to Wire purchases young, off-the-track prospects all over the country to retrain and sell. Ruberto has bought many prospects from Bernardini and found Vestal's Gap to be a well put-together horse with the disposition to match. Within two weeks of his last race, Vestal's Gap had his first ride off the racetrack.

"Vestal's Gap not only had the brain for an amateur, but he rode like a horse with years of experience under saddle," Ruberto said. "He was pretty special from the start."

Marken had been following Ruberto's business for a while when she found Vestal's Gap's sale video on Facebook that December day. She'd been looking for a horse a little smaller, with the potential to work with Bowers for the Makeover. Affectionately nicknamed "Cheeto," Vestal's Gap measures 15.1 hands but stood tall as he advanced at a new career. After chatting with Ruberto about the gelding and learning of his easygoing disposition, Marken made the decision to purchase him.

Off the quick purchase, Marken made another fast decision when deciding who she wanted to work with her new horse, choosing Bowers because of his experience. Through his father Steve, Bowers grew up riding with the Pat Parelli natural horsemanship program and has been an instructor there since 2007, teaching and touring through the United States, Canada and Australia.

Vestal's Gap, a West Virginia-bred son of Bullsbay nicknamed Cheeto, has found a new calling as a competitive trail horse.

When it came to Vestal's Gap, Marken texted Bowers a simple, "Hey I think I found something." In March 2025, three months after purchasing Vestal's Gap, Marken drove her horse to Bowers' farm in Fort Collins.

"He was ready to see the world, for sure," said Bowers, a cattle rancher at heart.

Marken and Bowers agree that the most special thing about Vestal's Gap is his brain. Described as easygoing and trainable, the now 4-year-old made a good first impression.

"He has his moments, but he's very trainable, he's very personable," said Marken. "He is just pretty easygoing in the fact that he learns very quickly, and he's just been a dream to work with."

That level-headedness carried over to the Makeover, where Bowers was surprised to find that Vestal's Gap improved with exposure to the quick pace and busy atmosphere at the event.

"Once he got there, he was just cool as a cucumber and cruised around," Bowers said. "If anything, he was more focused and more able to be really taking my cues and taking my lead than he would be in his home arena. He just kind of felt like he deferred to my leadership."

As Marken put it, the best way to give a horse its best chance at the Makeover is with exposure.

"Positive experiences that your horse can have to all kinds of different environments [are important]," she said. "Take them to the horse show, let them hang out. That's huge."

She trusted Bowers and his process to give Vestal's Gap a chance to succeed at the Makeover. Bowers ponied Vestal's Gap through fields and rivers, even chasing cattle across the ranch before learning to navigate obstacles with a rider. His belief in letting the horse find his feet first paid off when Vestal's Gap brought home championship and reserve honors.

> "Everything we did through the whole time I had him, he just kind of took to it quite naturally. And he was kind of a happy learner, easy to teach things to.."
>
> – *Nathan Bowers*

"You know, he's just a special guy," Bowers said. "He loves doing all the trail stuff; he's bold and confident and when he goes in the show ring, he turns it up a notch. He's a pretty fun little horse in that way. It means a lot – my wife [Amy Bowers] won in 2019 in the Freestyle, and so this is my chance to kind of get even with her."

Marken and Bowers share a philosophy – don't push it if it's not right for the horse. When it came to Vestal's Gap, the choice to do the Makeover was clear from the earliest days, though competing would be second to creating a good foundation. Bowers shared the belief of letting the horse decide if he was ready, letting him set the training pace all the way up to show day.

"He's just a pretty great-minded horse," Bowers said. "Everything we did through the whole time I had him, he just kind of took to it quite naturally. And he was kind of a happy learner, easy to teach things to."

Bowers had Vestal's Gap in training seven months before the show. Despite the short amount of time, "Cheeto" proved to be a rock-solid companion for the trainer for his first Makeover. While Bowers is more interested in participating on the educational side of the RRP in the future, as a clinician or judge, he's proud of how much the horse accomplished in a short time.

"Nate really worked with the brain as far as building the horse's confidence," Marken said. "By the end, he was working cattle and, because Nate does ranch work, roping off him, and going over obstacles."

Vestal's Gap is enjoying a break in Marken's pasture with her previous Makeover Challenge horses, Princess Valentine (2021) and Carrobio (2022). She plans to make him her personal riding horse. ■

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Built Together

TRAINER KULP, OWNER WARRIOR'S REWARD CLAIM TITLES

By Ali Çetinok ■ Photographs by Equi-Photo, Inc.

A year after winning his first training title at Penn National Race Course, Brandon Kulp did not simply defend it, he ran away with it in 2025. In doing so, he turned the Grantville, Pa., oval into the home base of the best season of his career.

In 370 starts at Penn National last year, Kulp's horses won 111 races, finished second 75 times and third 60 times while earning $2,078,829. At all tracks, the stable put up 157 total wins from 541 starts to rank 11th in the nation, and $3,119,202 in purses. The season told a deeper story – one of expansion, patience, claiming savvy and a growing relationship with owner/breeder Warrior's Reward LLC that flourished at exactly the right time.

"It was kind of a breakout year for me," said Kulp, who reached 1,000 lifetime wins when Bedtime Story won Nov. 20. "Obviously, we won the training title last year, but this year we really expanded. We had stalls at Presque Isle Downs for the first time. I kind of had everything [from Warrior's Reward] this year, that was a big factor in the expansion. I had claimed a couple for myself and done well and kind of reinvested, and things just took off. Got a couple of new clients, but the biggest thing I would say is probably just the Warrior's Reward guys. Having pretty much all of their horses for the most part."

That relationship, between Kulp and Warrior's Reward principals Donny Brown and Tom McClay, became one of the defining threads of the Penn National meet. While Kulp dominated the trainers' standings, Warrior's Reward edged out a tight owners' race, finishing 2025 with 28 wins from 108 starts at Penn National and banking $650,416 in earnings.

Every one of those horses was trained by Kulp.

"It helps when you win a lot, but even when we don't, they have been great to me," said Kulp. "He and Tom obviously have a lot of horses and we're having a really good year."

For Brown, the partnership built gradually, then accelerated when results followed patience.

"Warrior's Reward is comprised of myself and Tom McClay. We are two equal partners in our breeding and racing endeavor," Brown said. "We've both been in racing a long, long time, more than I want to admit. We teamed up together maybe 10 or 12 years ago, getting some broodmares. Then, in 2019, actually purchasing Warrior's Reward to stand in Pennsylvania and then breed those broodmares."

Entering stud at Spendthrift Farm in Kentucky in 2011 and shuttling four years to Spendthrift in Australia, Warrior's Reward moved to Wyn Oaks Farm in Delta, with the Pennsylvania program and Penn National itself central to that plan.

"Tom and I have both been living in an area within 20 miles of Penn National forever and it started out by going out to Penn, training at Penn and racing at Penn and it's easy to get to," Brown said. "It's kind of in our backyard and it's fun. Taking friends out, taking family out. Sometimes getting a picture, sometimes just having a hot dog."

That accessibility helped McClay and Brown stay committed to the state's breeding incentives.

"The Pennsylvania program, with the owners' bonuses and breeders' bonuses, is pretty strong. We're big believers in that program," Brown said. "We began to realize that sometimes shipping out of state to get the other sires and spending time out of state with different boarding rates and different veteri-

Trainer Brandon Kulp turned in the best year of his career in 2025.

narian rates, we realized that it would be a lot nicer to have a stallion close to the mares to not spend so much money shipping and boarding out of state."

While Warrior's Reward himself was retired and relocated to Old Friends Equine in Kentucky in 2024, his influence continued to be felt in Pennsylvania in 2025, most notably through daughter Candy Reward.

The now 5-year-old mare, out of the Twirling Candy mare Unimagineable, became one of the most accomplished horses in Kulp's barn. Though her two biggest victories, the Princess of Sylmar Stakes and H.B.P.A. Stakes, came at Presque Isle Downs, she went 2-for-2 at Penn National and finished the year with five wins from six starts.

"We have her mom and she's always acted like she was going to be a nice racehorse," Brown said. "We've kept our focus in the PA program, even though we thought that she had the talent and ability to step out of Pennsylvania, but we just decided that because she seemed to be able to run on any surface, Presque Isle's synthetic or Penn's dirt or turf that we would just keep her home and have as much fun as we could and it's kind of been everything."

For Kulp, Candy Reward represented a breakthrough.

"That was the highlight," he said. "I hadn't won a stake in over five years, so for Candy Reward to win two stakes at Presque Isle, that was probably the highlight."

Candy Reward was one of several Warrior's Reward offspring who thrived under Kulp's care, along with Ballad of Warrior, who won three times last year at 3, twice at Penn National, and earned $132,150.

"The fun part about Ballad is that, as a 2-year-old, he trained with another one of our stakes-winning horses, The Boy's Warrior," Brown said. "As a 2-year-old Ballad and Boy's raced each other a few times, Boy's was kind of always beating Ballad. But then, as they got older, Ballad got better with age."

Tootaloo Kangaroo, here winning Nov. 13, was a big part of the Brandon Kulp stable.

Dakota Springs, here winning in July, won five races last year.

Ballad of Warrior, here winning in July, flew the flag for Kulp and owner/breeder Warrior's Reward.

Newcomer Angie's Reward hinted at big things in her 2-year-old season, winning her debut in July and taking the Miss Behaviour Stakes at Parx Dec. 30.

Kulp's dominance at Penn National extended well beyond a single ownership group. Three horses won five races at the track in 2025. Two, Tootaloo Kangaroo and Dakota Springs, are trained by Kulp.

Tootaloo Kangaroo, a 6-year-old mare by Hoppertunity, emerged as one of the most reliable allowance performers on the grounds. Her story began with a claim Jan. 3.

"We claimed her for $25,000 here, went through pretty much all of our conditions here," Kulp said. "Her last two starts we stretched her out going two turns and she really liked it. She was probably the best at Penn this year that ran consistently."

Bred in Pennsylvania by Klo Carroll, Tootaloo Kangaroo won four races for Kulp and client Joe Besecker (topped by a two-other-than allowance Nov. 13) and finished the season with $117,350 earned.

Dakota Springs followed a different path, one marked by persistence and a second chance.

"She was a horse that we actually claimed for $5,000 earlier in the year and right away, she won two in a row," Kulp said of a Jan. 2 claim from trainer Bernie Houghton. "I had lost her [to Houghton in March] and then we actually claimed her back for a different client. She won a PA-bred allowance right away, the second time I had her."

Despite the modest claiming prices and multiple barns, the now 5-year-old daughter of Uncle Lino won five of 12 starts, placed in four others, and earned $86,728 in 2025.

"She may have kind of ran under the radar for us, but she ended up winning quite a few races," said Kulp. "She's been a nice surprise as well."

Other contributors filled out the depth of the barn, including Three Polks, who went 7-4-1-0 with all starts at Penn National, as well as Reigert Girls, a daughter of Warrior's Reward, who won twice locally. Preach It Warrior, another by Warrior's Reward, won three in a row in less than a month.

Quasi Warrior, a son of Weigelia owned and bred by WynOaks Farm and Warrior's Reward, also flashed promise, breaking his maiden at Penn National and finishing the year with two wins at Parx. He returned at Parx Jan. 6 to win his first start at 4.

"Quasi Warrior ended up having a pretty good year for us," Kulp said. "He seems like he's looking like he's going to be a pretty nice horse as well. We've been really lucky with quality this year, not just quantity, which really helped me go to the next level."

That balance between numbers and class is what Brown appreciates most in Kulp.

"He's extremely competitive, which is what I like about him," Brown said. "He's hands-on in his business. He's in there every day talking to his staff, looking at the horses. He's very sharp with entries and the condition book."

Brown also appreciates Kulp's patience when it comes to the homebreds who race for the stable.

"He understands that we bred them for longevity and to race them and we always like to do what's right by the horse, even if it means exercising a lot of patience," Brown said. "With Brandon, he's always agreed with us. Yeah, let's give this horse a couple months out being a horse and bring him back and see what happens."

As good as 2025 was, Kulp knows the season may be difficult to replicate.

"I wouldn't have believed you," he said when asked to reflect on the year. "It will be a very hard year to top, but I'm always looking to do better, win more, and I'm just always looking to move forward.

"I don't know how we top it, but we're going to try."

NOTES: Besecker placed second in the owners' standings with 25 wins, five more than Bush Racing Stable . . . Tim Kreiser wound up second in the trainers' race, with 59 wins, six more than Bruce Kravets . . . **Angel Rodriguez** put up 114 wins to take the jockeys' crown over David Cora (85) and Jomar Torres (72). ■

Good Deal

DIVINE INTENTIONS SPEEDS CARGUYS RACING TO SUCCESS

By Paul Halloran

It wasn't exactly Penny Chenery ending up with Secretariat by losing a coin flip to Ogden Phipps, but there was some randomness involved with owner/breeder Ed Bussinger sending a Divining Rod filly to trainer Tyler Servis.

And so far, it is working out well.

In 2022, Bussinger – whose Carguys Racing started with three purchases by Servis' father John in 2015 – sent mares to Divining Rod and Uncle Lino. The resulting foals would be split, with one destined for John's stable and another for Tyler, who opened his own stable in 2019 after assisting his father.

John liked the idea, but lost out when the Uncle Lino foal headed his way died. The Divining Rod filly went to Randy Rentz in South Carolina for breaking and he told Tyler Servis he had a good one.

"Before she came up to me, all the indicators were in the right direction," Tyler Servis said. "Randy was pretty high on her."

Score one for farm optimism.

In four starts as a 2-year-old, Divine Intentions won twice and finished second once while banking $101,420. She was an impressive winner in the Shamrock Rose Stakes for Pennsylvania-bred fillies at Parx Racing Nov. 26, prompting Servis to run her against open company in the Future Stars Filly Division Stakes Dec. 30.

In that race, Divine Intentions was stretching out to 7 furlongs, breaking from the rail and taking on a 2-5 favorite in Law School, coming off a 14-length allowance win at Laurel Park. On a fast filly to begin with, there was no doubt Frankie Pennington would be sending from the inside and he took her right to the front. She led through reasonable fractions of :23.42 and :47.50, but Law School was always within striking distance. The Jamie Ness-trained daughter of Mitole took the lead on the turn and rolled to a 7-length win.

"I'm very happy with the performance," said Servis. "We missed five days of training due to weather and we missed a breeze. She was taking on open company and the favorite had very good numbers and was shortening up [from 1⅛ miles]. That filly went by at the top of the lane and she tried to dig in, but she came up a little short. We probably weren't going to beat the winner, but I wouldn't say we didn't belong."

She had certainly earned her way in based on her performance in the Shamrock Rose, in which she dominated on a sloppy track, bouncing back from a lackluster effort in her first start versus winners Oct. 22. She had broken her maiden on debut at Penn National Aug. 7.

"It seems like she gets herself in a good rhythm early and gets out of the gate good," Servis said. "I think we haven't got to the bottom of her yet. Everything we do with her in the morning, it's in hand with her ears perked straight up in the air. And you saw that in the [Shamrock Rose]. He rode her pretty good away from there and as soon as she got to the lead, her ears went straight up in the air like, 'OK, where's everybody at?' In the allowance, she got bumped pretty good at the break, and she never really got a good fluid motion after that, got hung out wide, and I thought she would get a ton out of the race. Once we got her back to the barn, she acted like a horse that would definitely improve off that effort."

Heading into her 3-year-old campaign, there seems to still be room for improvement, which is good news for Bussinger, who parlayed a meeting with John Servis in 2015 into a successful racing and breeding operation.

EQUI-PHOTO, INC.

Divine Intentions heads to victory in the Shamrock Rose at Parx Racing in November.

"I had a guy working for me and he said he owned horses and his trainer was John Servis. We had a meeting and after the meeting broke, I grabbed him and I said, 'Listen, I want to do this and I want to do it today.' He said, 'All right.' I said, 'No, I mean today. I want to do it right now.' So he called and we met with John the next day."

That meeting took place June 6, 2015, about 100 miles south of Belmont Park, where American Pharoah raced into immortality by winning the Triple Crown the same day. John Servis told Bussinger they could shop for a 2-year-old at the Ocala Breeders' Sales Company's upcoming sale that month.

"I thought we were going to buy one horse. We ended up buying three," Bussinger said. "By October, we were racing. And I had three pretty good horses."

The OBS purchases combined to win nine races – five by Poised for Action and two each by Viva La Kid and Wherebluebirdsfly.

Almost 11 years later, ask the owner how many horses he has and he has an answer that is not uncommon.

"My wife would say I have too many," said Bussinger, who owns three car dealerships and lives in Doylestown, Pa. "I have a bunch in training, a bunch on the farms, a bunch coming up. But listen, it's fun. I always worked, worked, worked, worked, worked, and my wife always said I need a hobby. So this is my hobby."

Bussinger's best horse to date is Adero, a 6-year-old gelding with nine wins, $437,925 and a stakes score on his record. The son of American Freedom was a private purchase after he failed to meet his reserve for $18,000 at the 2022 Fasig-Tipton Midlantic May 2-year-old sale. "I think we paid $20,000 or $25,000," Bussinger said. "He's a great horse."

Bussinger's next highest earner was Allevare, his first homebred. He bought the mare Discreetlin – named for his sister – in another private sale in 2016. She lost all seven starts, after which he bred her to Overanalyze. Allevare won five times and earned $198,000.

Shyza was another RNA purchase at the 2018 Keeneland September yearling sale. She won four races and banked

> "Some guys have real success. I've had a modicum of success, which is good. And just a little bit of success can keep your interest."
>
> *– Owner/breeder Ed Bussinger*

$115,295. When it was time to retire her, Bussinger suggested to John Servis that they breed her. Bussinger chose Divining Rod, a son of Tapit who stands at Country Life Farm, so he could have a Maryland-sired, Pennsylvania-bred horse.

That 2023 foal is Divine Intentions. In 2024, Shyza delivered a colt by Cupid now named King Amore and in 2025 she produced a Greatest Honour filly. The mare, a daughter of Cairo Prince, is in foal to Honest Mischief for 2026. Two other mares, Pretty Pants (in foal to Honest Mischief) and Tiz a Daydream (Yaupon) are expecting foals this year.

"John has always told me not to get too excited or too down," Bussinger said. "And Tyler is much the same. Let's see how they come out. You just try to keep a level head, and we'll take one step at a time. You have no idea until they lace them up, as they say."

Bussinger's racing origin story is somewhat atypical.

"I was a fan, but I hear most guys say their dad took them to the track when they were kids, but that wasn't me," he said. "I never stepped foot on the frontside until my first race [as an owner]."

Through Jan. 11, Carguys had won 60 races with earnings of almost $2.4 million.

"Some guys have real success. I've had a modicum of success, which is good," Bussinger said. "And just a little bit of success can keep your interest. So as long as you stay interested, that's the key." ■

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Last Print

Won Charles Town's 4½ furlong Gold Watch Overnight S in :51.77, third WV Dash for Cash Breeders Classic S. Son of leading WV sire **FIBER SONDE** (Unbridled's Song). Out of a winning half-sister to G3 LAWN RANGER and GEORGIE'S ANGEL (G1 producer). Family of 2YO champion ADA PROSPECT, G2 EXCAPER ($775,360), etc. Sire of allowance winner First Print in his first crop.

Redirect

Sire of multiple stakes winners **DIRECT THE CAT** ($251,750) and **IM THE DIRECTOR** ($221,642), etc. Son of leading sire **SPEIGHTSTOWN** (Gone West). Out of MSW **ALTERNATE** ($550,695). Half to G1 millionaire **HIGHER POWER** (sire), G2 millionaire **ALTERNATION** (sire), and MSW **INTERRUPTED.** Dam a half to Canadian HOY and leading sire **PEAKS AND VALLEYS**.

Spiritus Invictus

Sire of four winners from two small crops to race. Son of leading sire and sire of sires **WAR FRONT**. Out of G1 **CENTRE COURT** (Smart Strike), winner of $961,048. Half to G3 **NAVRATILOVA**. Second dam G2 **LET** ($604,020). From a solid family of sires: **JOYEUX DANSEUR, NOVERRE, ARAZI, AJDAL, FORMIDABLE**, etc.

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Climbing the Ladder

SHAW'S TOP NOTCH RACING ENJOYS BANNER 2025

By John Piassek ■ *Photographs by Equi-Photo, Inc.*

Growing up in the Mayfair neighborhood of northeast Philadelphia, Marty Shaw was a frequent visitor to Parx Racing (then known as Philadelphia Park) with his father. Marty learned about the importance of having a strong work ethic from his father, a union steamfitter for 30 years.

"A huge part of the picture was his work ethic," Shaw said. "He always said, 'If you want to go do something, you really have to put the time and effort into it.' "

Those words continue to resonate with Shaw. As Top Notch Racing, the Thoroughbred owner enjoyed great success at Parx in 2024, with 50 wins and $1.4 million in purse earnings. Not content, Shaw took it up another "notch" in 2025 as Top Notch won 60 races and earned $1.5 million, finishing first in the track's owners' standings by wins and second by purse money. Nationwide, Top Notch won a career-best 92 races and earned $2.1 million, sixth in the country by wins and 32nd in earnings, going along with three wins and $127,787 under Shaw's name.

Shaw didn't have a background in racing, besides simply being a fan, and was drawn into ownership just over 10 years ago by a friend. The friend met a trainer at Parx, bought a share of a horse, and asked Shaw to go 50/50, just to see how he liked it. Though the friend lost interest, Shaw was captivated, and dove into the Parx claiming game. He won his first race as Top Notch at Parx in March 2014, and from there, his operation has continued to grow, numbering more than 50 horses.

Shaw looks at the Ragozin Sheets when deciding who he wants to claim. Developed by Len Ragozin (who also got his start in racing as a fan, and later an owner), Ragozin figures – often known simply as The Sheets – are used by horseplayers and owners alike to determine which horses are going in and out of form. If Shaw sees a horse he thinks is trending in the right direction, he puts in a claim. Looking beyond the standard past performances gives Shaw a leg up over the competition, in his book.

"I've read Ragozin's books several times to understand exactly what the concept is, and written notes on it like I'm in college," said Shaw. "Anyone can walk into the racetrack and grab the regular program or the *Daily Racing Form*, which means everyone's looking at the same thing. If you're doing the same thing as everyone, why would you think you have an edge? You have to go beyond to truly have an edge."

Just over half of Shaw's horses are with trainer Ernesto Padilla-Preciado at Parx, with the remainder split between Michael Jones at Charles Town and Rob Atras in New York. Shaw has used Padilla-Preciado, known as "Chito," for several years, and is a big fan of his work ethic.

"I'd like to give a special thanks to Chito, because he's a very hard worker," said Shaw. "The guy shows up at 4:30 a.m. every day and is there until day's end, he rides his own horses, and works very, very hard. He's never had any [medication] positives, no nonsense. He does right by everybody. Sometimes, when your success rate is high, it's just because you put in the time. A lot of people have talent, but you're only going to beat out others by putting in that time."

Shaw's partnership with Padilla-Preciado is a big reason for his expanded Parx presence. Shaw went from 11 starts at Parx in 2022 to 71 in 2023 to 251 in 2025.

"It all comes back to Chito and the dedication that he and his staff put in," Shaw said. "He has a great staff and they put

Marty Shaw (right) and son Quattro (Martin P. Shaw IV) accept the 2024 Parx Racing leading owner award along with trainer Ernesto Padillo-Preciado.

in the same time as him. When you're running any kind of business and seeing people who really care, without you saying a word, that makes you have more confidence."

That led Shaw to send more horses to the barn, and it has paid dividends. Shaw lives in nearby Doylestown, Pa., and keeps an office near the track for his day job of developing and rehabbing homes. This makes it easy for him to visit his horses and see them race on a regular basis. In addition to that accessibility, Shaw's involvement at Parx is linked to the Pennsylvania-bred program.

"I love the Pennsylvania-bred bonus," said Shaw. "Pennsylvania's very good to people who breed and race Pennsylvania-breds. You get 40 percent on a Pennsylvania-bred win, on top of what the purse might be, but if you're the breeder, you also get an additional 40 percent check in the mail from the state."

Shaw considers the state-bred program an important part of the Pennsylvania racing scene, and claims as many Keystone-bred runners as he can.

"They do a very good job of incentivizing people to stay in the state," he said. "That program does a lot for the state, in that they're supporting local farms and giving everyone a piece of the action. I feel like staying in Pennsylvania and contributing to the jobs and workforce around here is a better way of doing things than always looking toward Kentucky-breds

Top Notch Racing's Shetalkstomuch scores at Parx in December, when she was claimed for $16,000.

with good breeding. The program is so good, it isn't hard to make that decision."

Among the headliners of Top Notch's 2025 season were Shetalkstomuch, a daughter of Uptowncharlybrown who earned more than $100,000 on the season before being claimed away in December, and Talkin Pharoah, a winner of seven of 10 overall starts and six of eight (with two seconds) at Charles Town. Pennsylvania-bred gelding Divine Miracle, who won five races after getting claimed by Top Notch in June 2024 and was retired with $508,537 in earnings in July 2025, is another favorite of Shaw's.

Of course, any future Top Notch claim has a long way to go to match the accomplishments of Parx Hall of Famer Ruby Bleu. Claimed by Top Notch for $12,500 as a 3-year-old in November 2017, the Pennsylvania-bred son of Messner won 10 races and earned $486,038 in the Top Notch silks before getting claimed away in 2021. In 100 starts for multiple connections, Ruby Bleu won 23 races and earned $939,169.

Even if he doesn't find another Ruby Bleu in the claim box, Shaw looks forward to more success at Parx this year. For anyone who aspires to follow in his footsteps, he says work ethic is the key: "Tread lightly, step in and see if it's for you, and make sure you have the right connections and the right people who are working hard. If you want to do something like this, you really have to put in the time and effort."

Leaderboard Look

Jamie Ness ran away with the 2025 training title at Parx, piling up 129 wins as part his best-in-the-nation 353 wins on the year (at a 25 percent win clip). In addition, horses he co-owned with Madison Avenue Racing Stable and Morris Kernan Jr. earned $1.7 million at Parx to lead all owners while putting up 54 wins to finish second behind Top Notch in the standings. . . Trainer **Michael Pino**'s horses won 94 races (from 320 starts, a win percentage of 29 percent) at the track in 2025 to finish second, 40 wins ahead of Jacinto Solis. Ness, Pino and Butch Reid were the only trainers to top $2 million in purse earnings at Parx. . . Florida-bred **Neigh Dude** and Kentucky-bred **Bottles** tied atop the horse list with six wins each at Parx. Fourteen horses won five races at the track . . . The richest of the local runners was **Pachelbel**, a Pennsylvania-bred daughter of Hoppertunity with 17 starts at the track – her first Jan. 13 and final Dec. 31 – while recording five wins, five seconds, four thirds, earnings of $274,170, and a second-place finish in the Disco Chick Stakes in October. . . **Mychel Sanchez**'s 204 wins at Parx turned the jockeys' standings into a laugher as Paco Lopez wound up second with 89. Dexter Haddock rounded out the top three with 74. Sanchez finished the year with 307 wins overall, fifth in the national standings behind Irad Ortiz Jr., Lopez, Jose Ortiz and Flavien Prat. He won 23 stakes with 17 horses, including three with Reid-trained **Maximus Meridius**. . . The New Year's Eve card included three $75,000 stakes. Ness and partners won the Kris Kringle with **Call Me Fast**, who rallied to catch Point Dume in the stretch. Pennsylvania-bred Maximus Meridius won the Blitzen for LC Racing, Cash is King and Wellesley Stable. Bred by Westerly Farm, the now 5-year-old son of Maximus Mischief won for the eighth time while pushing his career earnings to $644,430. **Boutwell Time** closed the year with a victory in the Mrs. Claus Stakes for trainer Juan Guerrero and Jeremy Sussman, Ten Strike Racing and Cory Moelis Racing . . . Juveniles took the stakes stage Dec. 30 with victories by **Angie's Reward** in the $75,000 Miss Behaviour Stakes for Pennsylvania-bred and -sired fillies. The daughter of Warrior's Reward rallied from fifth early to win for owner and co-breeder (with WynOaks Farm) Warrior's Reward LLC and trainer Brandon Kulp. Two races later, **Mailata** made like his namesake – Philadelphia Eagles offensive lineman Jordan – and demolished two foes in the Parx Future Stars for owners/breeders Cash is King and LC Racing and trainer Reid. The Pennsylvania-bred Maximus Mischief colt won by 19 lengths while running his winning streak to three and second in a stakes following his Pennsylvania Nursery score. Super C Racing and Jagger Inc.'s **Law School** won the $75,000 Parx Future Stars filly division by 7 lengths over Divine Intentions for Ness while collecting her third win of 2025. ■

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— Broker's Tip —

BY RICK ABBOTT

Feathered Friend

By and large, horse people are animal lovers. They are dog lovers and cat lovers and, generally, like to be surrounded by their four-legged friends. Some would even admit to being more comfortable around animals then they are among humans. I would venture to say the dog partisans outnumber the cat fanciers but the cats proliferate due to their alleged utility in keeping vermin in check.

Horse farms tend to accumulate other species of domestic animals in most peculiar ways and, during our 40-year stint as farm owners, we were not immune to that phenomenon. One such arrival occurred when our daughter Carly was a child of 5 or 6.

Irene Kuipers was a client from Ridgewood, N.J., and a lovely, if eccentric, woman who owned a 10-acre "farm" in the middle of a heavily developed suburb of New York City. In order to maintain their real-estate tax status as "agricultural," Mr. and Mrs. Kuipers had to have an actively reproducing farm animal on the property. A horse qualified as a "farm animal" so Irene decided to become a Thoroughbred breeder. She bought a mare called Full Delivery and asked us to manage her breeding career.

One year she had a colt that was particularly hard for them to handle. It was decided that she would ship him to us at Charlton so that we could tame him in anticipation of taking him to a yearling sale. We sent Harry Price up to Ridgewood to pick up the colt and when he arrived at our farm the first words out of Harry's mouth were, "This was not my idea."

In the box stall, along with the yearling, was a plump Rhode Island Red hen sent along by Mrs. Kuipers, "to keep him company." The horse could have cared less about the chicken but we were now the owners of a flock of one. Carly was immediately captivated and, of course, named her Henny Penny. The hen, to her credit, was very docile and seemed to like having a 6-year-old carry her around the farm for hours on end. She quickly became Carly's pet chicken and she outshone all other pets in this girl's eyes. Did I mention that she was our only chicken?

Free range as she was, inevitably, Henny Penny "got crosswise" with one of the dogs and sustained a deep laceration on her ample breast. Carly was inconsolable and a call was made to our veterinarians at the Delaware Equine Center. As it happened, they were in the middle of a birthday party for our vet, Dr. Steve Soule, and they told Dixie to bring her over and that they would sew her up. With Carly in close attendance, one of the young vets sutured the hen while she (the chicken) ate chicken salad and birthday cake. The patient recovered.

Again, inevitably, it was only a matter of time until her next tangle with a dog. Sadly, this one proved fatal. Because of the recent deaths of a few of Carly's other favorites, we decided that she did not need another trauma. An emergency call went out to Mrs. Kuipers that another Rhode Island Red was needed and Irene answered the call. This time, when the replacement arrived, she was accompanied by a white Leghorn hen sent "to keep her company." The new Henny Penny stepped adroitly into her role but she was not nearly as docile as the original.

In a reversal of the usual cliché, the presence of the white hen was explained as "a cousin" who had come to visit Henny Penny "from upstate." We soon learned that the red hen's lack of docility was probably caused by the presence of her country cousin. We were told that a single chicken craves attention but that one with a chicken friend will not be welcoming to human handling. Carly couldn't understand why her friend had rejected her and needed a lot of reassuring. Needless to say, that was Dixie's job.

Some weeks or months went by with no solution in sight. Our farm was a no-kill operation so eating the Leghorn was not an option and none of our friends were poultry lovers at the time. No answer presented itself until one day the trash men arrived to empty the dumpster and I noticed that the helper (not the driver) was eying up the white hen like a bachelor in a singles bar. I sidled over to him and he whispered, "that's some beautiful Leghorn." I told him he could have her on the condition that he take her immediately. He smiled, picked her up lovingly and climbed up into the cab.

My last, and best, view of the white hen featured her sitting on the smiling man's lap as the trash truck rumbled out of the farm lane. Within days, freed of her "cousin from upstate," the new Henny Penny was being carried all over the farm by an excited little girl.

Carly is now grown woman, career woman and mother of two young girls. Within the last two years someone mentioned the story of Henny Penny and the emergency replacement of her doppelganger. Carly, it seems, had never been told the story and had no idea that a switch had been made. As it had taken place at least 35 years ago she was aghast that she had been deceived for all these years.

Apparently, if you tell a story long enough it becomes the truth, sort of. ■

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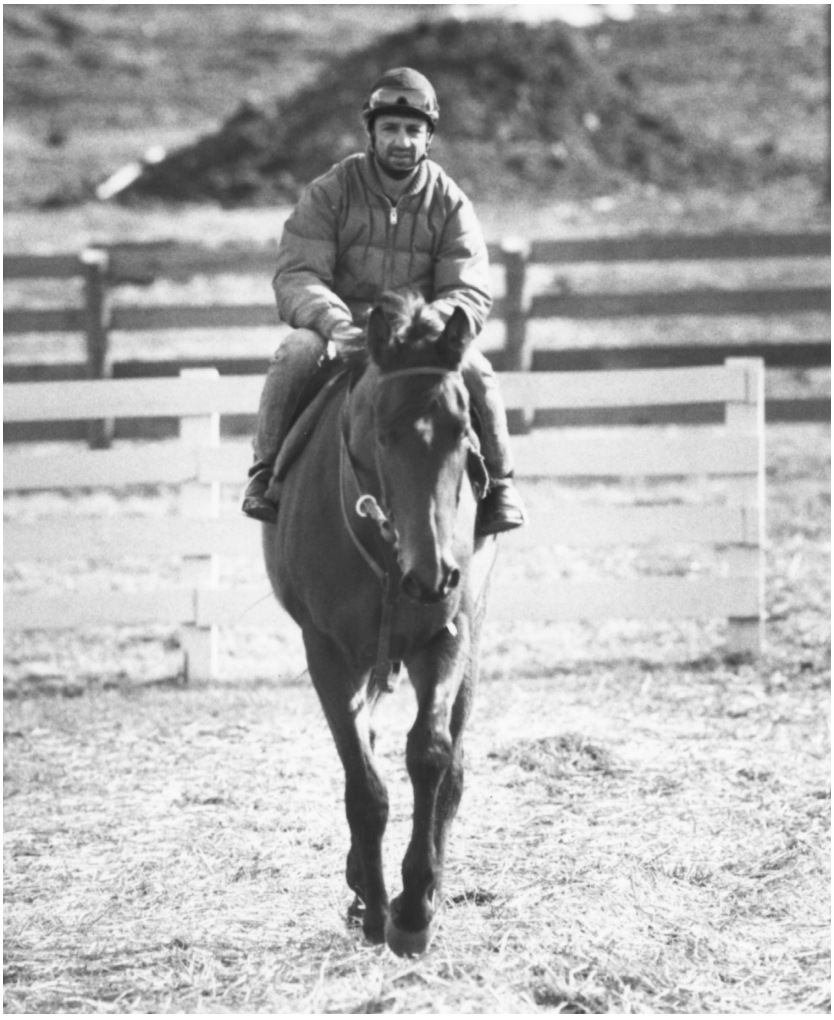
— In Memoriam —



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Vince Bracciale Jr.

Vincent Bracciale Jr., whose 20-year career as a Thoroughbred jockey took him to 3,545 victories, a mount in the Kentucky Derby and two rides aboard the legendary filly Ruffian, died peacefully at home in Mount Airy, Md., Dec. 15. A husband to Terri for 53 years and father of five daughters, he was 72.

One of four children and the only son, Bracciale grew up in West Virginia in the shadow of two racetracks, Charles Town and Shenandoah Downs, the son of jockey Vincent Sr. and Jeanette Prolago Bracciale. The younger Vince worked with horses at the track before and after school, and became a jockey after graduating high school in 1970. A state champion wrestler his senior year, he passed on a scholarship to powerhouse Iowa State in favor of a life in the saddle.

"He would always tell us that he thought he could make a little money and use college as a fallback plan," said youngest daughter Amy Crouch. "He thought he could go to college any time."

Vince, nicknamed "Jimbo" for as long as anyone can remember, never needed the fallback plan.

He rode his first winner, Penny Peanut, at Shenandoah in 1970 and won 41 races that year. He ran the total up to 173 in 1971 and finished seventh in North America with 234 wins in 1972. His 1973 season included 403 wins, second behind only Sandy Hawley. In 1974, Hall of Fame trainer Frank Whiteley Jr. twice called on Bracciale to ride undefeated filly Ruffian when her regular jockey Jacinto Vasquez was suspended. She won both.

"Some parts of it I was a little bit nervous and I never used to get nervous," he said in 2024 about what it was like to ride the champion. "I was just thinking, 'What if she stumbles leaving the gate or something?' But she didn't put a foot wrong. She was so smooth. I remember the crowd was standing and clapping when we came back. It was something else."

Ruffian was a perfect 10-for-10 when she suffered a fatal injury in a match race at Belmont Park in 1975. She joined Thoroughbred racing's Hall of Fame the next year.

She wasn't the only star Bracciale handled.

In 1986, he and Maryland-bred Broad Brush won four races together including the Grade 1 Wood Memorial on the way to the Kentucky Derby. In the only Derby mount of Bracciale's career, they finished third behind Ferdinand. Bracciale also rode top sprinter Dave's Friend to multiple stakes wins, guided Majesty's Prince, I'm Splendid and Hatchet Man to Grade 1 scores, and won the 1980 Remsen-G2

with future champion Pleasant Colony. In 1986, he won Canada's most prestigious race – the Queen's Plate – aboard Golden Choice.

Bracciale won three jockey titles at Pimlico Race Course and two each at Laurel Park and Bowie Racetrack, and was a regular at Mid-Atlantic tracks in Maryland, New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New York and his native West Virginia. He won Pimlico's Dinner Party Stakes five times and won six consecutive races at Bowie in March 1973. After riding seven races in January 1990, he retired to the family farm in Woodstock in Howard County, Md., and bred and trained Thoroughbreds. In 1995, he returned to ride a race with other retired and amateur jockeys at Laurel and finished second. Official statistics credit Bracciale, represented by agent Steve Vaonakis throughout, with 20,291 mounts and those 3,545 wins. His mounts earned $37.8 million in purses.

Bracciale trained mainly for himself and close friends, never saddling more than 38 starters in a season. His last win as a trainer came with Square Slice at Laurel in February 2024, but he also enjoyed a September 2025 win at Delaware Park with Miss Fulton Gal, a horse he bought and owned with friends and family though trained by Mike Gorham.

For all his success on the racetrack, Bracciale was known at home for far simpler gifts.

"He was a very, very, very, very humble person," said Crouch. "The trophies, the races, he didn't care about them. He loved the horses and the people, he loved to tell stories about his riding days, but he was all about his wife, his daughters and his grandkids. He was so proud of us, he viewed our husbands as sons. He was an amazing grandpa. He couldn't believe what he and my mom built."

Terri and Vince met in middle school, and she was the love of his life. Early on, they followed the racing calendar and relocated to racetracks in the region and beyond. Later, as parents to a growing family, they settled down at the farm. In retirement, Vince foaled mares, planted a garden, and helped raise horses, vegetables, daughters and – eventually – grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

"His favorite things in retirement [although he could never fully step away from the track] were fishing, golfing, watching his grandchildren's sports and events, celebrating with family, gardening, cooking traditional Italian fare, and spending simple time with our mom," said Amy. "In Howard County, people know him more as a farmer than a jockey."

The Bracciale house was always open to friends, and future friends, who needed a place to stay, a meal, someone to talk to.

"My dad helped so many people, and became this incredible mentor," said Amy. "We're getting messages from young jockeys that he helped. All have said the same thing, 'He gave me an opportunity.' He believed so much in other people's success. People keep saying they viewed him as their best friend, some people we don't even know."

Predeceased by his parents, Bracciale is survived by his wife, daughters (and sons-in-law) Lori Mellendick (Bill), Stephanie McClure (Scott), Niki Yurkow (John), Natalie Trott (Rick) and Amy Crouch (Jason), 11 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Jane Cartwright

Sister to a Hall of Fame steeplechase jockey and wife to a veteran Maryland trainer, Jane Cartwright died Jan. 5. She was 94. She was born May 23, 1931, to Lillian Maude and Joseph Leiter Aitcheson.

Aitcheson trained Maryland-bred steeplechase star Tuscalee, who raced in the 1960s and 1970s was inducted into Thoroughbred racing's Hall of Fame in 2013. Cartwright's brother Joe Aitcheson Jr., Tuscalee's regular jockey, won a North American record 440 jump races and also made the national Hall of Fame.

Jane led a double life as a fashion model and a horsewoman, while also working as a newspaper reporter. She is survived by sons Robert Curley, Jay Curley (Alison), and Todd Curley; four grandchildren, niece Jody Davis (Tom) and their two sons.

In addition to her parents and brother, Cartwright was preceded in death by her husband Ronald Cartwright, a longtime Maryland-based trainer of such standouts as Mz. Zill Bear, Castelets, Forry Cow How and Miss Slewpy.

Diane Crump

A pioneering American jockey who broke gender barriers in racing, including becoming the first woman to ride in a pari-mutuel race and in the Kentucky Derby, Diane Crump died Jan. 1 in

Winchester, Va., after a battle with brain cancer. She was 77.

A Connecticut native, Crump developed a love for horses early in life. Her family later moved to Florida, where she took riding lessons as a teenager. Her career began amid resistance to female riders. On Feb. 7, 1969, she became the first licensed female jockey to ride in a professional pari-mutuel Thoroughbred race in the United States at Hialeah Park in Florida. Her participation in the race was so contentious that she required a police escort through the crowd.

A year later, she rode Fathom in the Kentucky Derby, becoming the first woman to compete in America's most celebrated horse race, finishing 15th of 17 runners. Over a career that spanned nearly three decades, Crump rode in races across the country and recorded 228 victories before retiring in 1998; her last win coming at Meadowlands Sept. 24, 1997. She remained involved in horses – training, operating a sales business and bringing therapy horses to hospitals and care facilities.

Crump is survived by her daughter, Della Payne; sister, Linda Suave; brother, Burt Crump; and three grandchildren. She was married to trainer Don Divine from 1969 to 1987.

Kevin Kellar

A Maryland horseman and manager for 40 years of Worthington Farms in Glyndon, Kevin Kellar died on Christmas Eve following a brief bout with pneumonia. He was 71.

Born in Baltimore, Kellar grew up in Overlea and was the son of Alexander and Jo Ann Kellar. The John Carroll High School graduate played football, baseball and basketball, and pitched a complete game at Baltimore's Memorial Stadium to defeat McDonogh in the 1971 Maryland Scholastic Association B Conference championship. Kellar graduated from the University of Maryland in 1976.

His career in the equine industry began in high school, when he worked weekends at Bel Air's Country Life Farm. After college, he was hired as farm manager by Country Life owner Joe Pons. In 1980, Worthington Farms owners J.W.Y. "Duck" and Glennie Martin approached Pons about offering his young employee the position of stallion manager for Worthington's Lord Gaylord. Pons recommended him.

"Kevin did so much for all the people on the farm," Glennie Martin said. "He was more than just a horseman. He cared for everyone. With his vegetable garden, he fed the farm. He did it all without asking."

As Worthington Farms is home to the legendary Maryland Hunt Cup, Kevin's responsibilities included year-round oversight of the vast course that straddles Tufton Avenue.

"All the little hidden things on a farm, he did so well," said "Duck" Martin. "The paddock for the Hunt Cup, he took special pride in its appearance."

Kellar and his wife Julie also hosted an annual post-Hunt Cup celebration at the family home on the farm for nearly 40 years.

Kevin will be remembered by many, but especially by Julie Campbell Kellar, his wife of 41 years, and by his older brother, Raymond Kellar, both of whom will not soon forget his hard-headedness or the warmth and comfort of sharing a conversation with him. Predeceased by parents, sisters Mary Anne Bradshaw and Karen MacLeod, and father-in-law, Donald Campbell, Kellar is survived by children and spouses, Emmit (Lindsey), Benjamin (Christina), and Emily Brown (Tyler); four grandchildren; and 10 nephews and nieces.

Gregg McCarron

Retired jockey and trainer Gregg McCarron died at his farm in Mt. Airy, Md., Jan. 8 after suffering a heart attack. A winner of 2,403 races in a 24-year jockey career based primarily in the Mid-Atlantic, McCarron was 77.

A native of Dorchester, Mass., McCarron never sat on a horse until he was 18 years old. After graduating high school, he went to college with the idea of becoming an accountant until a co-worker at a local department store started talking to him about becoming a jockey.

"A woman I worked with had a good friend who was the manager at Suffolk Downs," McCarron said in a 1979 feature in the *Maryland Horse* magazine. "The more she talked, the worse I did in school. By April I had quit school and gone to work for Odie Clelland. He taught me to ride and my whole life changed. I was 18."

He rode his first race at Suffolk in 1969, was a top apprentice there and at New Hampshire's Rockingham Park and between 1970 and 1979, won at least 100 races a year – turning that unlikely introduction into a career.

He partnered with the Maryland-based On the Sly to win multiple stakes including the 1977 Jockey Club Gold Cup-G1. On the Sly gave McCarron

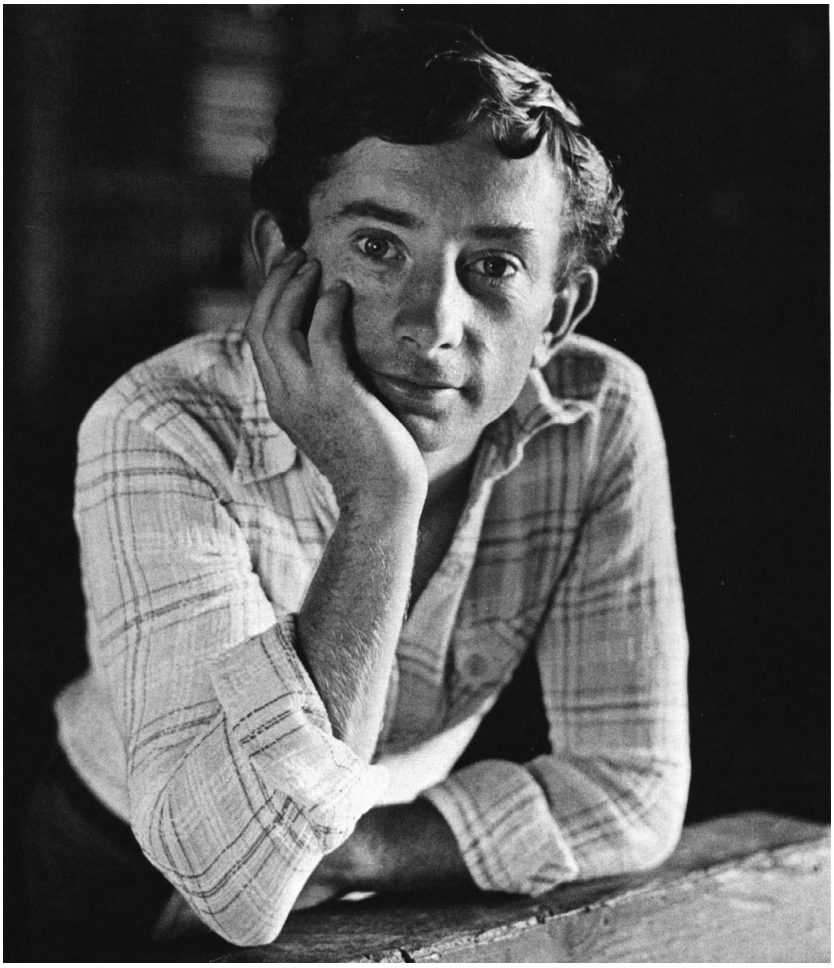
his only Kentucky Derby-G1 mount, a fifth in 1976 (one spot ahead of younger brother Chris aboard Cojak), after winning twice at Bowie and once at Garden State Park that winter. McCarron won graded stakes for such powerhouse stables as Christiana, Wimpfheimer and Cherry Valley Farm, including the 1983 Wood Memorial-G1 aboard Bounding Basque and the 1982 Alabama-G1 with Broom Dance. In 1984, McCarron steered future Hall of Famer Mom's Command to victory in the Selima Stakes at Laurel Park. Riding for Calumet Farm and Hall of Fame trainer John Veitch, McCarron won the 1981 Spinaway-G1 at Saratoga with champion 2-year-old filly Before Dawn.

Along the way, McCarron became responsible for two other successful jockey careers.

Chris followed him to a job at Suffolk and went on to win 7,141 races and induction into Thoroughbred racing's Hall of Fame. Chris called his brother a mentor.

"Gregg led me to my career as a jockey and he was there for me every step of the way," Chris said via a release from the family. "He was my idol and I always tried to emulate everything he did. He mentored me in my formative years and I would not have had the career I did without him in my life."

Decades later, Gregg's son Matt – too big to ride on the flat – became a steeplechase jockey and won two championships with the National Steeplechase Association. Matt McCarron rode champions Hirapour (Ire), Demonstrative and McDynamo among others and finished with 206 wins over jumps – eighth on the career list.



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"Being Chris's nephew and my son didn't help him at all in steeplechasing," said Gregg after Matt's title in 2003. "He went out and learned how to do it, and seeing him win the championship was one of the neatest things I've ever been a part of. He epitomizes the one that did it on his own. He truly, truly did."

While working for Clelland, Gregg McCarron met his future wife Darlene and they bought the farm in Mt. Airy in the late 1970s as a home, and a base for a racing/breeding operation while partnering with Darlene's parents. They bred, raised, boarded and trained horses off the farm – at first with Darlene training and Gregg riding. When his riding career ended in 1993, he went into training. Maryland-bred Amourette won three stakes in 2001. For Betty Moran's Brushwood Stable, McCarron trained stakes-placed four-time winner Meghan's Joy who became major graded-stakes producer.

In addition to training, Gregg worked as a racing commentator for NBC Sports on several Breeders' Cup broadcasts.

Gregg is survived by his wife, son, grandson Trevor, eight siblings and numerous nieces and nephews.

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Maryland Horse®

February 2026 | Official publication of the Maryland Horse Breeders Association; Vol. 91, No. 2

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Partnership makes progress in first year

By Joe Clancy

A little more than a year ago, Thoroughbred owners/breeders Dr. Tom Bowman, Jim Dresher and David Wade discussed ways to raise the profile of the Maryland Thoroughbred industry. Some phone calls, a meeting or two, a little fundraising and some recruitment of others resulted in the creation of the Maryland Thoroughbred Partnership.

The mission was simple enough – work on a message explaining the industry's importance from a business, agricultural and economic perspective and pitch that message to the media, the general public, state legislators, business leaders and anyone else who might listen.

The results? Progress.

Backed by support from the Maryland Horse Breeders Association and Maryland Thoroughbred Horsemen's Association plus a core group of individuals – through the Maryland Horse Foundation, the MTP hired the Bel Air-based public-relations firm Nevins and Associates. Steered by a board of seven people (with input from a growing list of contributors) with ties to the industry and chaired by Dresher, the MTP meets electronically twice a month to discuss issues, topics, themes and direction.

Nevins launched a website, created social-media accounts and worked its contacts in Baltimore and beyond.

"Our mission was clear: to strategically educate Marylanders about the economic impact, cultural legacy, and current vitality of the state's Thoroughbred industry, as horse racing in Maryland heads toward an exciting future," wrote Nevins' Wes Popolizio in an annual impact report.

The 2025 achievements covered several main bases.

The marylandthoroughbredpartnership.com website attracted more than 14,000 unique visitors and served as a digital hub for content created by Nevins and others about breeding and racing.

Social media posts on Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram engaged with the public directly, anchored by video content captured on location by Nevins' in-house team. Filming locations included Bonita Farm, Country Life Farm, Fair Hill Training Center, Foxhall Equine, Glenangus Farm, Laurel Park, the Maryland Horse Library and Education Center, the Maryland State Fairgrounds at Timonium, Northview Stallion Station, Roland Farm, Sycamore Hall Farm and Willowdale Farm. The MTP accounts have more than 3,350 followers across all platforms, and content has meant 770,000 impressions, 250,000 video views, 40,000 post engagements and 12,000 link clicks to the MTP website.

A virtual interview series on the Citybiz Baltimore business news platform with Thoroughbred industry participants titled It's Post Time. Nevins president and CEO David Nevins interviewed 13 people including Dresher, Bill Knauf of The Maryland Jockey Club, trainer Tim Keefe, Maryland Secretary of Agriculture Kevin Atticks, Mid-Atlantic Horse Rescue's Bev Strauss, Maryland Million President TK Kuegler and others.

Beyond generated content, the Nevins team worked to attract media coverage of racing and breeding in the state. Stories in print and on television spotlighted key figures and brought the industry public attention.

Television coverage in 2025 included:

• A WBAL news piece spotlighting Maryland-based national steeplechase champion Snap Decision in January.

• Features on WBAL and WMAR on the Maryland Horse Library and Education Center's Racing's Black Pioneers exhibit which aired Feb. 23.

• A March 21 visit to Country Life Farm to highlight foaling season in the state on WBAL.

• A WMAR feature on jockey Forest Boyce in April.

• A pre-race visit to the Maryland Hunt Cup course by WBAL April 23.

• A Maryland Public Television State Circle interview with Knauf May 2.

• "Where's Marty?" segments with WJZ's Marty Bass from Bonita Farm in May and again in October.

• A racing feature at the Maryland State Fair with Fran Burns on WJZ.

• Yearling show previews on Fox45 and WJZ.

• Maryland Million previews on Fox45 and WBAL.

Print coverage in 2025 included:

• A *Baltimore Sun* feature on Snap Decision in February.

• A *Baltimore Business Journal* feature on the owners of Snap Decision, business leaders Mike Hankin, Charlie Noell and Charlie Fenwick, in March.

• A *Thoroughbred Daily News* article on the MTP, written by Marylander Sara Gordon in May.

• A *Baltimore Business Journal* interview with Knauf about Pimlico and the Preakness.

• A *Baltimore Banner* feature on Maryland-bred Post Time's start in the Whitney Stakes-G1 at Saratoga.

• A *Baltimore Banner* Q&A interview with owner Mike Repole about Maryland-bred Mindframe.

Nevins estimated the value of the earned media coverage to be between $500,000 and $1 million.

"A core element of MTP's mission is to ensure the critical economic and cultural value of the Thoroughbred industry is recognized by key decision-makers," Popolizio wrote in the annual report. "Over the past year, we have prioritized direct and strategic conversations with state leaders and members of the legislature, all designed to move the needle and consistently remind the powers that be that the horse industry is a significant and indispensable part of the Maryland economy."

To that end, MTP played an active role in planning and executing the Maryland Million kickoff celebration at Baltimore's Camden Yards in October. The event brought together Thoroughbred industry leaders, business executives, elected officials and other key stakeholders for a night of networking and education.

Looking ahead, MTP has engaged Nevins for 2026 and plans on following a similar path with a diverse set of goals:

• Visit Thoroughbred farms, training centers and other key sites across the state, profiling the diverse individuals and compelling human (and equine) stories that underscore the industry's cultural legacy, economic impact, and other benefits.

• Increase total unique website users.

• Secure earned media placements on TV, print/digital and radio.

• Expand social media reach and engagement while growing the combined follower base and driving clicks to the website.

• Develop, host and execute a new, exclusive event for elected officials and state leaders at a Thoroughbred farm to provide firsthand insight into the industry's significance, economic impact, and role in preserving Maryland's agricultural landscape.

For more about the program, links to some of its work and ways to participate, see itsposttime.com.

❧

MARYLAND-BRED RACE FUND

Breeders and stallion owners get bonus increases in 2026

The recommended increases in breeder bonuses, presented at the Maryland Racing Commission meeting Jan. 14 by the Maryland Fund Advisory Committee, passed for the period of Jan. 1 through June 30, 2026.

Recommendations presented on behalf of the Maryland Horse Breeders Association, as administrator of the MBRF:

◆ Increase the percentages for Breeder Bonuses to 24 percent and Stallion Bonuses to 8 percent, paid for first, second, and third on overnight and stakes races (capped at $100,000). Maryland Million Day will remain Breeder 15 percent and Stallion 5 percent.

◆ Increase the Breeder Bonus for Maryland-sired* Maryland-breds foaled in 2023 and after to 33.6 percent (40 percent more than the bonus for non-Maryland-sired Maryland-breds) for first, second and third on overnight races. **Sire must be registered.*

◆ Increase the percentage for the additional Maryland-sired* Maryland-bred maiden winner Breeder Bonus to 8 percent (for foals of 2022 and earlier). **Sire must be registered.*

"We are happy that the Maryland Racing Commission recognizes the importance of Maryland-bred and -sired horses to our racing product," said MHBA Executive Director Cricket Goodall. "The Maryland-Bred Race Fund bonus program is vital to rewarding breeders for doing their business in Maryland." ❧

Maryland Fund Stakes Recaps

Jim McCue

Takethemoneyhoney

Politely Stakes

$100,000-guaranteed, 6 fur., registered Maryland or Virginia-bred or sired fillies and mares, 3 & up. Laurel Park, Dec. 20.

Dk.b./br.m., 2021, Golden Lad—Goodonehoney, by Great Notion. Bred and owned by Kasey K Racing Stable, Michael Day and Final Turn Racing Stable; trained by Michael M. Moore. Foaled at Northview Stallion Station, Chesapeake City, Md.

		Lifetime			
starts	*1st*	*2nd*	*3rd*		*earnings*
7	5 (2)	2 (1)	0		$251,770
					(through Dec. 20)

2025: 1st $100,000 **Serena's Song S**, 1 mi. and 70 yds., fillies and mares, 3 & up, Monmouth, May 11; $100,000 **Politely S**, 6 fur., registered Md. or Va.-bred or sired fillies and mares, 3 & up, Laurel, Dec. 20; 2nd **Willa On the Move S**.

Takethemoneyhoney, the 4-5 favorite, was behind a wall of horses as the field in the $100,000 Politely Stakes rounded Laurel Park's far turn. Finding a sliver between longshots Itsamonstamash and Green Eyed Monster in midstretch, she pushed through to earn a hard-fought 1-length victory in the third of four stakes on Dec. 20.

Under Eliseo Ruiz for Parx-based trainer Michael Moore, Takethemoneyhoney recorded her second stakes victory and fourth win in six starts in 2025. The 4-year-old daughter of Golden Lad was making her second start off a six-month break, after just missing against open company in Laurel's Nov. 22 Willa On the Move Stakes.

Cutting back to 6 furlongs for the second time, Takethemoneyhoney chased leaders Miss Harriett and Conquerthosewecan behind fractions of :22.77 and :46.31. "The filly was so professional," said Ruiz. "I had a lot of horse at the quarter pole. I just waited for the moment and got aggressive." She drove home in 1:11.52. No Guts No Glory Farm homebred relatives Itsamonstamash (also a daughter of Golden Lad, sent off at 55-1) and Green Eyed Monster completed the $1 trifecta worth $184.70.

It was Takethemoneyhoney's fifth win in seven starts, to go with two photo finish seconds. A 13½-length winner at Parx in her only outing at 2, she took her stakes debut in Monmouth Park's Serena's Song in May. The Politely boosted her earnings to $251,770.

"She's got a world of talent, obviously," Moore said. "If you keep her together and keep her happy, she runs every time."

A homebred for Kasey K Racing Stable, Michael Day, and Final Turn Racing Stable, Takethemoneyhoney is out of the Weber City Miss Stakes-winning Great Notion mare Goodonehoney, a Maryland-bred full-sister to four-time stakes winner Twisted Ride also conditioned by Moore. Goodonehoney was bred by Kasey K and campaigned for the same partnership, retiring with earnings of $193,098 from 10 starts.

Takethemoneyhoney is Goodonehoney's first foal. The mare's next three, all born in Pennsylvania, are Wouldja Couldja (by Uncle Lino), on the board in all three starts last year at 3; Honeysmakemoney, a 2-year-old filly by Wicked Strong; and Seriously Honey, a filly by Cloud Computing born in late April. Goodonehoney was bred to Golden Lad again for 2026. ❧

Jeff Snyder

Slam Notion

Howard and Sondra Bender Memorial Stakes

$100,000-guaranteed, 7 fur., registered Maryland or Virginia-bred or sired, 3 & up. Laurel Park, Dec. 20.

B.g., 2022, Great Notion—Balestra, by Grand Slam. Bred by Eric A Rizer and Nancy M. Rizer; owned by Eric A Rizer; trained by W. Robert Bailes. Foaled at No Guts No Glory Farm, Woodbine, Md.

	Lifetime			
starts	*1st*	*2nd*	*3rd*	*earnings*
12	7 (3)	2	0	$354,770
				(through Dec. 20)

2025: 1st $125,000 **Star de Naskra S**, 7 fur., registered Md. or Va.-bred or sired 3-year-olds, Colonial, July 12; $100,000 **Maryland Million Sprint S**, 6 fur., 3 & up, sired by eligible Md. stallions, Laurel, Oct. 11; $100,000 **Howard and Sondra Bender Memorial S**, 7 fur., registered Md. or Va.-bred or sired, 3 & up, Laurel, Dec. 20.

In his first start since taking the Maryland Million Sprint Stakes in October, Eric and Nancy Rizer's homebred Slam Notion scored in the $100,000 Howard and Sondra Bender Memorial Stakes Dec. 20 at Laurel Park. In the final start of his 3-year-old campaign, he won for the third time in a row, each against older runners, and got his third stakes win of the year.

Restricted to horses bred or sired in Maryland or Virginia, the 7-furlong stakes drew a field of five, all Maryland-breds. Odds-on favorite Quint's Brew returned off a seven-month layoff. In four starts early in his 4-year-old season, the son of Mosler won the Jennings and 7-furlong General George at Laurel Park by a combined 11½ lengths, and had close seconds in New York in the Carter-G2 and Westchester-G3.

Slam Notion went off the third choice as Blue Kingdom, a winner of four of five, took a lot of play at 8-5. Blue Kingdom went to the lead after Quint's Brew broke sluggishly from the rail, and Slam Notion, under Jevian Toledo, was poised off the leader's right flank through an opening quarter-mile in :23.59 and half in :47.24.

"I was surprised we were that close," said trainer Robbie Bailes.

Turning for home, Slam Notion opened a 3-length lead and never looked back, maintaining the margin to the wire ahead of Quint's Brew after 1:24.51.

A winner of six of 10 in 2025 with two seconds, all at 7 furlongs or less, Slam Notion got his first stakes victory in the Star de Naskra at Colonial Downs over the summer by defeating Barbadian Runner. Through Jan. 15 the son of Great Notion boasts a career mark of 12-7-2-0 with $354,770 in the bank.

Slam Notion is out of the winning Grand Slam mare Balestra and is a half-brother to six winners, five bred by the Rizers since purchasing Balestra for $4,500 in foal to Doneraile Court at the 2011 Keeneland January sale. Siblings include $270,855 earner Boppin Anda Weavin and $209,002 earner Subject to Change. ❧

Maryland-bred Stakes Winners

Coglianese Photography

Dazzling Dame kicks off 2026 with Busanda score

Respect the Valleys' Dazzling Dame made her first appearance in nearly three months and blew away the field in the 1-mile $150,000 Busanda Stakes for sophomore fillies at Aqueduct Jan. 3. In the first 2026 stakes to offer Kentucky Oaks-G1 points, with 20 to the winner, Dazzling Dame moved to third on the leaderboard with 22 points (just behind Eclipse Award finalists Super Corredora and Explora).

Under Jevian Toledo for trainer Brittany Russell, the daughter of Girvin took the lead, setting fractions of :23.55 and :47.20 with favorite Believable applying slight pressure. Around the far turn, the big bay kicked clear to open a commanding lead, winning by 11½ lengths in 1:38.30 over the fast track. Her time was more than three-fifths of a second faster than 3-year-old colt My World's win in the Jerome on the card.

"She ran great. Everything kind of went right the whole trip. We were thankful for that," Russell said. "She came out of it and looks good. She seems really good."

Making her fifth start, all at different tracks, she won for the fourth time. A 5¾-length winner in her debut at Laurel Park June 27, she stepped up to take the $100,000 Sorority Stakes at Monmouth Aug. 17 and scored in the $100,000 White Clay Creek at Delaware Park Oct. 11 in her final start of 2025. Her lone defeat was a fourth in the 1-mile $300,000 Pocahontas-G3 at Churchill Downs in September. Her five starts yielded $240,525.

The plan for Dazzling Dame will be longer distances, with Russell hinting Colonial Downs' $250,000 Virginia Oaks at 1⅛ miles in March or the 9-furlong Gazelle-G3 in April at Aqueduct. Both offer Kentucky Oaks points.

Bred by Maria Haire and foaled at Northview Stallion Station, Dazzling Dame was purchased at the OBS March sale of 2-year-olds by Respect the Valleys for $45,000 after being a $50,000 RNA as a weanling at the 2023 Keeneland November sale and selling for $65,000 to Tahoe Bloodstock at the 2024 OBS winter mixed sale two months later.

Dazzling Dame is the fifth foal, and third winner, out of the multiple stakes-placed Corinthian mare Awesome Dama, who is related to Haire's former Maryland sire Eclipticalspraline. The latter's graded stakes-winning dam Ms. Mostly (by Copelan) is the granddam of Awesome Dama. Awesome Dama produced a filly by Pinehurst in 2024 and delivered an Engage filly on Preakness Day 2025 now named Ms. Engaged. ❧

Post Time puts bow on career with Robert T. Manfuso win

Jeff Snyder

In the final start of his career before entering stud at Northview Stallion Station, Post Time shined in the $100,000 Robert T. Manfuso Stakes over younger rival Barbadian Runner Dec. 20 at Laurel Park.

The 13th win of his career was one of his best. The race earned Post Time a career high 110 Beyer Speed Figure, and the Equibase chart note chronicles his trip: "broke a step slow, regrouped and was taken firmly in hand while saving some ground, took closer order nearing the far turn while well within himself, idled behind a pair of rivals leaving the five-sixteenths, angled three wide and found a seam into the stretch, responded when shaken up, closed sharply under a solid hand ride to forge past Barbadian Runner heading to sixteenth pole, spurted clear then was geared down in the final yards."

At one point Ellen Charles' Hillwood Stable colorbearer was nearly a dozen lengths off modest fractions of :23.90, :48.14 and 1:13.49. Barbadian Runner, rating early along the rail, waited for a path to open on the far turn and slipped through to get the jump on Post Time entering the stretch. The leading Maryland-bred 3-year-old of 2025 had a length and a half advantage on the field as he took command, but Post Time was on the move.

Post Time's momentum propelled him clear by 1¼ lengths after 1⅛ miles in 1:44.54. It was more than 15

lengths back to Pay Billy in third. The victory avenged Post Time's Maryland Million Classic defeat to Barbadian Runner in October, which winning rider Sheldon Russell said "will forever haunt me." The second ended his Laurel win streak at 10; the son of Frosted retires with a Maryland mark of 12 wins in 13 starts (one coming at Pimlico). In 23 lifetime starts, he recorded 13 wins, four seconds, and five thirds for earnings of $1,558,705.

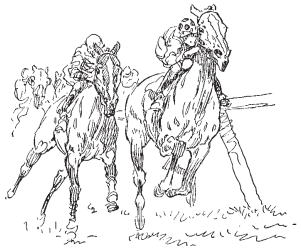
Trainer Brittany Russell was emotional after the race and told Vinnie Perrone with the Laurel media department, "He's taught me a few things. If I ever get another one like him, I'll know to enjoy every single step. . . These horses are hard to come by."

Post Time shipped from his Fair Hill base to Northview Stallion Station, approximately 20 miles south in Chesapeake City, in time for the farm's open house Jan. 4.

Bred by Dr. and Mrs. Tom Bowman, Dr. Brooke Bowman and Milton Higgins, the gray was purchased by Cary Frommer for $85,000 at the 2021 Fasig-Tipton Midlantic fall yearling sale.

Named Maryland-bred Horse of the Year, champion older male and champion sprinter in 2024 and champion 2-year-old male in 2022, Post Time won stakes every year from ages 2 to 5 for a total of nine stakes wins. He accounted for the Maryland Juvenile Stakes in 2022, City of Laurel in 2023, the Carter-G2, General George-G3, Polynesian and Jennings in 2024, and won the Deputed Testamony and his second consecutive Polynesian this year. Seven of his nine stakes placings were graded, with Grade 1 placings in the Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile, Metropolitan Handicapand Whitney Stakes in 2024.

Out of the stakes-winning Fairbanks mare Vielsalm, Maryland's 2024 Broodmare of the Year, Post Time is a half-brother to nine-time winner and $326,606 earner What Does It Take (by Munnings). Four-year-old half-sister Field Song (by McKinzie) sold for $80,000 as a yearling at the Fasig-Tipton Midlantic fall sale, and for $140,000 at OBS at 2 and lost two starts in 2025. Vielsalm delivered a Tapit colt last April in Kentucky and was bred back to Frosted. ❧



Maryland Fund Report

Bonuses paid for races run
in October 2025 at Maryland tracks

Breeder bonuses

Includes the additional 10 percent Maryland-sired bonus for winners of maiden races, initiated Jan. 1 during the 2022 Laurel winter meet. That bonus is reflected in the second figure earned for the race.

Anchor and Hope Farm Inc.—Basic Miles: Oct. 12, 1st race, $3,240/$1,080. God I Need a Favor: Oct. 31, 3rd race, $5,670. ($9,990)

Barak Farm and Dinos Thoroughbreds LLC—Mister Roscoe: Oct. 10, 2nd race, $1,350. My Boy Bud: Oct. 3, 2nd race, $540; Oct. 19, 8th race, $3,240. Skip Thru Da Fire: Oct. 31, 10th race, $405. ($5,535)

Barak Farm and Sharon Dodgen—Backnthewoods: Oct. 12, 4th race, $2,430. Curlene's Spirit: Oct. 24, 4th race, $1,080. ($3,510)

BB Horses—Royal Seamstress: Oct. 10, 4th race, $405.

Joseph Besecker—Kilo Road: Oct. 25, 11th race, $2,385.

Black Cloud Racing LLC—She's a Gem: Oct. 10, 4th race, $2,430.

Charles Blanford—Uncle Irish: Oct. 17, 4th race, $2,430.

David Benjamin Bloom—Holy Storm: Oct. 3, 5th race, $4,536.

Bonita Farm—Juniper Juice: Oct. 11, 10th race, $3,000.

Bonita Farm and Grandview Stable Inc.—Kobe's Hope: Oct. 5, 1st race, $4,050.

Frank A. Bonsal Jr.—Holy Brick: Oct. 18, 3rd race, $1,080.

Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Bowman—Blue Kingdom: Oct. 11, 11th race, $1,500. Lundi Loot: Oct. 11, 9th race, $1,500. Mr. Supreme: Oct. 26, 6th race, $1,543.50 ($4,543.50)

Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Bowman and Michael Bishop—Coronova: Oct. 11, 6th race, $750.

Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Bowman and Dr. Brooke Bowman—Dale's Bluff: Oct. 3, 6th race, $3,087.

Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Bowman, Dr. Brooke Bowman and Estate of Milton P. Higgins III—Post Time: Oct. 11, 11th race, $3,000.

Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Bowman and Skeedattle Associates—Pont Aven: Oct. 25, 9th race, $1,417.50.

Bowman and Higgins Stable—Don't Tell Deren: Oct. 11, 8th race, $1,500. Kerness K: Oct. 18, 9th race, $6,480. Map to the Moon: Oct. 3, 4th race, $990. Master of None: Oct. 18, 2nd race, $652.50. ($9,622.50)

Karen Brown and Heather Brown—Shakin My Head: Oct. 18, 1st race, $1,480.50.

Melissa Cantacuzene—Better Watch It: Oct. 4, 3rd race, $1,080; Oct. 26, 3rd race, $1,080. ($2,160)

Louis C. Carrico—Nancy Mary: Oct. 3, 7th race, $1,800; Oct. 24, 2nd race, $5,400. ($7,200)

Wes Carter—Had to Have Him: Oct. 11, 2nd race, $8,250.

Clover Hill Farm Inc.—Naymar: Oct. 3, 2nd race, $1,080.

Country Life Farm, Paul Berube and Karen Linnell—Touisset: Oct. 11, 10th race, $1,500.

Country Life Farm and Real Good Time LLC—Bill of Rights: Oct. 11, 3rd race, $600.

Country Life Farm and Sister State LLC—Lady Ensign: Oct. 5, 8th race, $6,615.

Country Life Farm and Starr of Quality LLC—Our Ham Sandwich: Oct. 19, 8th race, $1,080.

Daniel C. Crowley and Non Stop Stable—Doc's Miracle: Oct. 11, 5th race, $3,000. Haileysfirstnotion: Oct. 11, 12th race, $1,500. ($4,500)

Dark Hollow Farm—Whiskeyinthejaro: Oct. 11, 6th race, $4,125.

Designated Hitters Racing—Tik Tok Daddy: Oct. 4, 7th race, $1,080; Oct. 26, 1st race, $540. ($1,620)

George L. Doetsch—Straight to Water: Oct. 31, 2nd race, $3,240.

James T. Dresher Jr.—Caseofthemondays: Oct. 25, 9th race, $2,835.

Annette Eubanks and Daniel Eubanks—World On Fire: Oct. 19, 4th race, $2,970/$990. ($3,960)

Daniel G. Eubanks—Red Spitfire: Oct. 25, 5th race, $4,536.

Steve R. Ferguson—Lady Charlotte: Oct. 10, 4th race, $810.

Robert E. Gamber—I Can Do It: Oct. 11, 1st race, $600.

Glenangus Farm LLC—Let Her Pass By: Oct. 10, 1st race, $1,480.50. Birdy Whisper: Oct. 19, 8th race, $540. First Pearl: Oct. 3, 4th race, $2,970 ($3,510)

Grandview Stable Inc. and Dominick J. Juno—Dolice Vita: Oct. 11, 3rd race, $1,200.

Greycross Stable LLC—Seaside Road: Oct. 3, 7th race, $900; Oct. 24, 2nd race, $1,800. ($2,700)

Maria M. Haire—Ecliptical Gina: Oct. 17, 1st race, $1,080. Neolithica: Oct. 11, 1st race, $3,300. Prince of Darkness: Oct. 19, 6th race, $4,050. ($8,430)

Michael J. Harrison DVM—Cluck Cluck: Oct. 11, 1st race, $1,200. Jack's Legend: Oct. 11, 4th race, $1,500; Oct. 24, 8th race, $7,155. Rylnnslookinglucky: Oct. 17, 10th race, $495. Tasty Time: Oct. 17, 10th race, $990. ($11,340)

Herringswell Stables Ltd.—Anotherhope: Oct. 5, 7th race, $2,970; Oct. 26, 4th race, $2,970. ($5,940)

James Hibbert—Cactus: Oct. 18, 8th race, $6,480; Oct. 25, 12th race, $1,665. ($8,145)

Hickory Ridge Farm—All the Hardways: Oct. 31, 9th race, $1,080.

Hillwood Stable LLC—Golden Kid: Oct. 19, 6th race, $1,350. Juniper's Jubilee: Oct. 31, 5th race, $1,057.50. ($2,407.50)

Catherine R. Jager—Boys Go to Jupiter: Oct. 17, 10th race, $2,970.

Jagger Inc.—Nit Witness: Oct. 4, 4th race, $1,350. Paco the Taco Man: Oct. 18, 9th race, $2,160. Rowsie Express: Oct. 31, 8th race, $6,615. ($10,125)

Jet Black LLC—Stars Align: Oct. 18, 3rd race, $3,240.

Estate of R. Larry Johnson—Coringa: Oct. 11, 4th race, $8,250. Great Heavens: Oct. 10, 9th race, $2,205; Oct. 18, 8th race, $2,160. Heldish: Oct. 31, 6th race, $540. Sky's Not Falling: Oct. 24, 8th race, $2,385. Waittilmidnitehour: Oct. 5, 8th race, $1,102.50. Whenigettoheaven: Oct. 11, 2nd race, $3,000. ($19,642.50)

Harry Kassap LLC—High View: Oct. 5, 1st race, $1,350.

Lady Olivia at North Cliff LLC—Davyjonz: Oct. 31, 9th race, $2,160. Italiano Kid: Oct. 19, 11th race, $540. Likeike: Oct. 18, 1st race, $8,883. ($11,583)

Carl Lanier—Freeze the Fire: Oct. 31, 6th race, $3,240. She's No Uncle: Oct. 18, 5th race, $1,080. ($4,320)

Lewis Family Racing Stable—Neverworkedaday: Oct. 18, 4th race, $2,115.

Little Man Farm—Beltane: Oct. 12, 3rd race, $540. Chimney Sweep: Oct. 24, 6th race, $922.50. ($1,462.50)

Eric Y. Long—No More Calls: Oct. 25, 5th race, $756.

Daniel E. Marconi—Farooq: Oct. 4, 10th race, $1,350.

Helen C. Marshall—Big Earn: Oct. 18, 5th race, $3,240.

Ann Warfield Merryman and Richard F. Blue Jr.—Gift of Gab: Oct. 25, 4th race, $3,240.

Elizabeth M. Merryman—Midnight Renegade: Oct. 12, 4th race, $405; Oct. 26, 2nd race, $450. ($855)

Mike Dalton LLC—Sneaking Suspicion: Oct. 26, 3rd race, $540.

Bryan B. Minnich—King's River: Oct. 11, 6th race, $1,500; Oct. 25, 8th race, $6,615. ($8,115)

Murmur Farm—Celtic Harp: Oct. 31, 5th race, $2,961. Mister Agent: Oct. 12, 4th race, $810. ($3,771)

Nancy Lee Farms—Worth a Dime: Oct. 11, 10th race, $8,250.

No Guts No Glory Farm—Green Eyed Monster: Oct. 11, 7th race, $3,000. In Honor of Jeff: Oct. 4, 6th race, $4,536. ($7,536)

No Guts No Glory Farm and Tapit Syndicate—Tartabull: Oct. 25, 9th race, $6,075.

Clarke Ohrstrom—Granuaile: Oct. 12, 9th race, $1,080.

David W. Palmer—Kissling: Oct. 4, 8th race, $495.

Frank A. Perri Jr.—Cattivo Ragazzo: Oct. 18, 9th race, $1,080.

A. Leonard Pineau—Crossland: Oct. 24, 9th race, $2,385.

Dr. and Mrs. A. Leonard Pineau—Change My World: Oct. 10, 9th race, $6,615. Nothinglesswilldo: Oct. 10, 6th race, $1,057.50. ($7,672.50)

Casey Pinkard—Skittliedat: Oct. 5, 6th race, $5,535/$1,845. ($7,380)
Joel Politi—Biscuitwiththeboss: Oct. 26, 5th race, $1,350. Boss Mode: Oct. 3, 2nd race, $4,536. Jolly Boss: Oct. 18, 8th race, $1,080. ($6,966)
Vivian E. Rall—Great Idea: Oct. 11, 2nd race, $1,500.
Valter J. Ramos—Bernie the Star: Oct. 4, 10th race, $675; Oct. 25, 3rd race, $4,050/$1,350. Ready for Magic: Oct. 25, 7th race, $990. ($7,065)
Eric A. Rizer and Nancy M. Rizer—Slam Notion: Oct. 11, 12th race, $8,250. Ginger Snap: Oct. 11, 5th race, $1,500; Oct. 31, 7th race, $8,883. Slewperstitus: Oct. 11, 5th race, $8,250. ($18,633)
Rolling Meadows Farm—Bond's Belle: Oct. 5, 7th race, $990; Oct. 26, 4th race, $990. ($1,980)
Thomas J. and Tara L. Rooney—Amazing Bernie: Oct. 18, 7th race, $2,970.
Alexandro Rubim-Dias—Over My Cents: Oct. 4, 4th race, $675.
SAB Stables Inc.—Pippin the Warrior: Oct. 25, 5th race, $1,512.
Frank T. Sample—Onyx Ten: Oct. 11, 7th race, $8,250.
Shamrock Farm—Barbadian Runner: Oct. 11, 11th race, $8,250.
South Branch Equine LLC—Sharmin: Oct. 11, 8th race, $4,125.
Matt Spencer and Kelly Cox—Anita Beer: Oct. 25, 7th race, $2,970.
James B. Steele Jr.—Divining Smile: Oct. 11, 8th race, $750; Oct. 19, 7th race, $1,080. ($1,830)
Strongline Thoroughbreds LLC—Dancing Denae: Oct. 10, 2nd race, $945.
Sycamore Hall Thoroughbreds LLC—Formal Affair: Oct. 4, 2nd race, $2,970; Oct. 11, 3rd race, $3,300. Garage Beers: Oct. 17, 7th race, $2,115. Ribbonsinherhair: Oct. 31, 10th race, $810. ($9,195)
Sycamore Hall Thoroughbreds LLC and Ellen Charles—Society Ball: Oct. 10, 7th race, $1,305.
Tanterra Stables—Mo's Glitter: Oct. 11, 9th race, $3,000.
The Elkstone Group LLC—Vax a Nation: Oct. 25, 8th race, $1,102.50. Yo Adrian: Oct. 24, 10th race, $1,800. ($2,902.50)
The Orebanks—Sin Boldly: Oct. 10, 1st race, $2,961; Oct. 31, 7th race, $1,480.50. ($4,441.50)
Thornmar Farm LLC—Born Charmer: Oct. 25, 2nd race, $990. Fear Nothing: Oct. 4, 8th race, $2,970. Take a Hint: Oct. 24, 7th race, $4,995. ($8,955)
Marie Trombetta—Christmas Spirit: Oct. 12, 6th race, $495.
2500 Determined Holdings—Back Wall Bandit: Oct. 17, 6th race, $1,350. Maclean's Rook: Oct. 31, 9th race, $6,480. Youknownothing: Oct. 11, 4th race, $3,000. ($10,830)
Two Legends Farm—Big Cuddle: Oct. 11, 9th race, $8,250.
Two Legends Farm and Sycamore Hall Thoroughbreds LLC—Amie's Symphony: Oct. 19, 9th race, $7,155.
Katharine Merryman Voss—Frappart: Oct. 24, 10th race, $900. Ticklers: Oct. 10, 8th race, $4,050. ($4,950)
Susan Wantz—On a Proud Note: Oct. 26, 4th race, $495.
Warning Drums Racing LLC—Arise My Love: Oct. 24, 3rd race, $900. Diane Lee: Oct. 18, 5th race, $540. Happy This Day: Oct. 17, 1st race, $3,240. Radiant Tones: Oct. 18, 3rd race, $540. ($5,220)

Stallion bonuses

BANDBOX (Paco the Taco Man: Oct. 18, 9th race, $720. Take a Hint: Oct. 24, 7th race, $1,665): Northview Stallion Station—$2,385
BARBADOS (Barbadian Runner: Oct. 11, 11th race, $2,750): Shamrock Farm.
BLOFELD (Better Watch It: Oct. 4, 3rd race, $360; Oct. 26, 3rd race, $360. Bond's Belle: Oct. 5, 7th race, $330; Oct. 26, 4th race, $330. Celtic Harp: Oct. 31, 5th race, $705. Likeike: Oct. 18, 1st race, $2,115. Mister Agent: Oct. 12, 4th race, $270. Pont Aven: Oct. 25, 9th race, $337.50. Shakin My Head: Oct. 18, 1st race, $352.50. Tasty Time: Oct. 17, 10th race $330): Blofeld Syndicate—$5,490.
BOURBON COURAGE (Arise My Love: Oct. 24, 3rd race, $300. Davyjonz: Oct. 31, 9th race, $720): Bourbon Courage Syndicate—$1,020.
DIVINING ROD (Divining Smile: Oct. 11, 8th race, $250; Oct. 19, 7th race, $360. Fear Nothing: Oct. 4, 8th race, $990. Straight to Water: Oct. 31, 2nd race, $1,080): Divining Rod Syndicate—$2,680.
DORTMUND (Dolice Vita: Oct. 11, 3rd race, $400): Kaleem S. Shah.
FIRST MONDAYS (Blue Kingdom: Oct. 11, 11th race $500. Caseofthemondays: Oct. 25, 9th race, $675. Dancing Denae: Oct. 10, 2nd race, $225. First Pearl: Oct. 3, 4th race, $990. High View: Oct. 5, 1st race, $450. Lundi Loot: Oct. 11, 9th race, $500. Mr. Supreme: Oct. 26, 6th race, $367.50): First Mondays Partnership—$3,707.50
FORCE THE PASS (Frappart: Oct. 24, 10th race $300. Had to Have Him: Oct. 11, 2nd race, $2,750): Wasabi Ventures Stables LLC—$3,050.
FRIESAN FIRE (Anita Beer: Oct. 25, 7th race, $990. Freeze the Fire: Oct. 31, 6th race, $1,080. Red Spitfire: Oct. 25, 5th race, $1,080. Skip Thru Da Fire: Oct. 31, 10th race $135. World On Fire: Oct. 19, 4th race, $990): Friesan Fire Syndicate—$4,275.
GALAWI (IRE) (Ginger Snap: Oct. 11, 5th race, $500; Oct. 31, 7th race, $2,115. Let Her Pass By: Oct. 10, 1st race, $352.50): Northview Stallion Station Inc.—$2,967.50.
GOLDEN LAD (Amazing Bernie: Oct. 18, 7th race, $990. Rowsie Express: Oct. 31, 8th race, $2,205. She's a Gem: Oct. 10, 4th race, $810): Golden Lad Syndicate—$4,005.
GREAT NOTION (Big Cuddle: Oct. 11, 9th race, $2,750. Cattivo Ragazzo: Oct. 18, 9th race, $360. Great Heavens: Oct. 10, 9th race, $735; Oct. 18, 8th race, $720. Great Idea: Oct. 11, 2nd race, $500. Haileysfirstnotion: Oct. 11, 12th race, $500. Heldish: Oct. 31, 6th race, $180. Jack's Legend: Oct. 11, 4th race, $500; Oct. 24, 8th race, $2,385. Kerness K: Oct. 18, 9th race, $2,160. Lady Charlotte: Oct. 10, 4th race, $270. Slam Notion: Oct. 11, 12th race, $2,750. Slewperstitus: Oct. 11, 5th race, $2,750. Sneaking Suspicion: Oct. 26, 3rd race, $180. Society Ball: Oct. 10, 7th race, $435): Great Notion Syndicate—$17,175.
HOLY BOSS (Basic Miles: Oct. 12, 1st race, $1,080. Biscuitwiththeboss: Oct. 26, 5th race, $450. Boss Mode: Oct. 3, 2nd race, $1,080. Crossland: Oct. 24, 9th race, $795. God I Need a Favor: Oct. 31, 3rd race, $1,350. Granuaile: Oct. 12, 9th race, $360. Holy Brick: Oct. 18, 3rd race, $360. Holy Storm: Oct. 3, 5th race, $1,080. Italiano Kid: Oct. 19, 11th race, $180. Jolly Boss: Oct. 18, 8th race, $360. Sin Boldly: Oct. 10, 1st race, $705; Oct. 31, 7th race, $352.50): Holy Boss Syndicate—$8,152.50.
IRISH WAR CRY (Born Charmer: Oct. 25, 2nd race, $330. Green Eyed Monster: Oct. 11, 7th race, $1,000. King's River: Oct. 11, 6th race, $500; Oct. 25, 8th race, $2,205. Neverworkedaday: Oct. 18, 4th race, $705. Royal Seamstress: Oct. 10, 4th race, $135. Whiskeyinthejaro: Oct. 11, 6th race, $1,375): Northview Stallion Station Inc.—$6,250.
KOBE'S BACK (Juniper Juice: Oct. 11, 10th race $1,000. Kobe's Hope: Oct. 5, 1st race, $1,350. No More Calls: Oct. 25, 5th race, $180): Bonita Farm—$2,530.
LONG RIVER (Doc's Miracle: Oct. 11, 5th race, $1,000): Long River Syndicate.
MADEFROMLUCKY (In Honor of Jeff: Oct. 4, 6th race, $1,080. Pippin the Warrior: Oct. 25, 5th race, $360. Rylnnslookinglucky: Oct. 17, 10th race $165): Madefromlucky Syndicate—$1,605.
MOSLER (Mo's Glitter: Oct. 11, 9th race, $1,000. Sharmin: Oct. 11, 8th race, $1,375. Touisset: Oct. 11, 10th race $500. Worth a Dime: Oct. 11, 10th race $2,750): Mosler Syndicate—$5,625.
NO NEVER NO MORE (Skittliedat: Oct. 5, 6th race, $1,845): Tigertail Ranch.
OUTFLANKER (Beltane: Oct. 12, 3rd race, $180. Chimney Sweep: Oct. 24, 6th race, $307.50): Outflanker Syndicate—$487.50
SEVILLE (GER) (Sky's Not Falling: Oct. 24, 8th race, $795): Seville Syndicate.
STREET MAGICIAN (Dale's Bluff: Oct. 3, 6th race, $735. Onyx Ten: Oct. 11, 7th race, $2,750. Whenigettoheaven: Oct. 11, 2nd race, $1,000): Estate of R. Larry Johnson—$4,485.
UNCLE LINO (Bernie the Star: Oct. 4, 10th race $225; Oct. 25, 3rd race, $1,350. She's No Uncle: Oct. 18, 5th race, $360): Northview Stallion Station—$1,935.

Maryland-bred top earners in 2025

(through December 31)

1. Mindframe	$1,407,220	11. Takethemoneyhoney	$221,770
2. Barbadian Runner	733,185	12. Coringa	217,568
3. Splendora	722,400	13. Lifelovenlaughter	210,300
4. Seismic Beauty	416,840	14. Heard On Thestreet	204,392
5. Future Is Now	366,000	15. Safe Trust	203,100
6. Post Time	330,795	16. Concrete Faze	200,550
7. Slam Notion	325,540	17. Cluck Cluck	197,376
8. Quint's Brew	280,000	18. Had to Have Him	194,530
9. Just Philtored	279,430	19. Passion Rules	190,775
10. Onyx Ten	249,000	20. Bold Diversion	187,690

UPCOMING

Maryland Horse Library Events

March 23 • 5 p.m.
Marylanders and the
Aintree Grand National

Relive the experiences of Maryland locals who made the trip across the pond for one of the toughest steeplechase races in the world, the English Grand National at Aintree!

REGISTER FOR EVENTS AT MARYLANDHORSE.COM/EVENTS

THE Maryland Horse FOUNDATION

View from the Loft

Vol. 3, Issue 2 Maryland Horse Library & Education Center Monthly News Feb 2026

Celebration with an equine air

The Maryland Horse Library & Education Center was decked out during the holiday season. Horses mingled with the Christmas and Hanukkah decorations found sprinkled throughout the library, display areas and meeting room. A six-foot lighted Christmas tree trimmed totally with equine ornaments brightened the front entryway.

Two collections were on display during the month of December. The equine ornaments were loaned by the Maryland Horse Foundation's Maryanna Skowronski, who has been collecting "horsey" ornaments for over 30 years. "I was happy to have the opportunity to display them," she said. "I've never wanted to replace all the family heirloom ornaments on my home tree, so this was the first time I've seen the entire collection out at one time."

A whimsical and fascinating collection of toys and games took over the main gallery, many supplied by breeder/owner Jay Williamson, who stepped up to the plate with the loan of his large collection of flat racing games. Amassed over years of auction-going, the earliest game, "Jerome Park," dates to the late 1890s. Jay is a great Library supporter. He loaned his Preakness poster collection to us for our 2025 Preakness 150 celebration.

Michael Finney's YOICKS! gallery loaned foxhunting games and Britain's lead foxhunting figures, as well steeplechase games and figures. (Michael's grandfather, Humphrey S. Finney, was the founding editor of *The Maryland Horse*, now *Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred*.)

We're sure that many of the games and toys we displayed were found underneath numerous Christmas trees in the past.

December events at the Library include (clockwise from top left): Jay Williamson with his collection; foxhunting games loaned by YOICKS!; Carol Fox (right) on hand at the Open House; and, of course, Santa and Oliver.

Some 90 plus visitors stopped in for our open house on Friday, Dec. 19, where they enjoyed the displays, holiday treats, and a visit with Santa. One of Santa's elves came in the guise of Oliver, Full Moon Farm's miniature horse ambassador, dressed in his Christmas finest. Main Street passersby honked, waved and even pulled over to the curb for a car-side meet and greet.

Reisterstown resident Sharon A.H. May loaned her miniature replica of Ladew Topiary Garden's manor house oval library for display, while authors Josh Pons and Carol Fox were on hand to sign copies of their books, *Letters from Country Life* and *Three Gallant Hearts*.

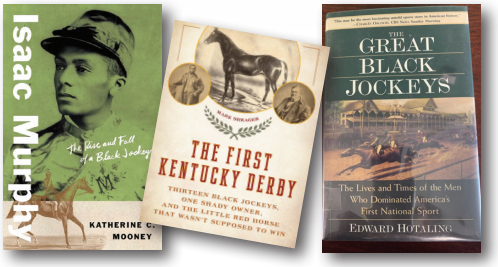
Farmers Fair

Mid-January saw MHLEC and Maryland Horse Breeders Association staff and MHBA and MHF board member Tim Clark at the Baltimore County Agricultural Center's Farmers Fair, where they chatted with attendees, promoted library events and explained the importance of the horse industry to Maryland's economy.

Marylanders at Aintree

An exciting event is being planned – Marylanders and the English Grand National. The evening will be a tribute to three of Maryland's most famous steeplechase horses: Aintree winners Billy Barton, Jay Trump and *Ben Nevis II. Tentatively scheduled for late March, the event will feature race films and speakers. Memorabilia will be on display throughout the month. Visit MarylandHorse.com/library for details.

Collection Highlights



February is Black History Month, and the MHLEC has a growing collection of books and materials recognizing the contributions of Black Americans to the horse world.

Late historian Edward Hotaling routinely addressed topics related to Black America and horse racing. MHLEC has three of his books on the shelves – *The Great Black Jockeys: The Lives and Times of the Men Who Dominated America's First National Sport; Wink: The Incredible Life and Epic Journey of Jimmy Winkfield*, and *They're Off! Horse racing at Saratoga*.

Self-published titles include Henry Peden Jr.'s *African American Horsemen, Harford County, Maryland;* Serena G. Mills' *Pimlico: The history of old Park Heights and old Hilltop, book two*; and Alvin Stone's *Stoney: The Story of My Dad's Life, An African American Groom of Horse Racing*.

A more recent title is *The first Kentucky Derby: Thirteen Black jockeys, one shady owner, and the little red horse that wasn't supposed to win*, by Mark Shrager, published in 2023.

Legendary jockey Isaac Murphy is the subject of two books, including Katherine C. Mooney's *Isaac Murphy: The Rise and Fall of a Black Jockey*, also published in 2023.

Thoroughbred racing isn't the only subject matter. Kareem Rosser's *Crossing the Line: A Fearless Team of Brothers and the Sport That Changed Their Lives Forever*, follows Philadelphians Rosser and his brothers as they become polo champions.

The Library also houses numerous vertical files with clippings and material on various subjects, many from the collection of the former Bowie Library's Selima Room.

In Memoriam

Suzan Harmon Stephenson

Suzan Stephenson, longtime curator of the Selima Room at the Prince George's County Memorial Library System's Bowie Branch, which contained information about horseracing history, passed away Dec. 8 at the age of 78 in Adelphi, Md.

Born in Hartford, Conn., Stephenson earned a bachelor's degree in English from Bates College in Lewiston, Maine, and graduated with a master's degree in library science from the University of Wisconsin – Madison. She started her library career at the Bowie Branch in 1971, where she remained until her retirement in 2017.

Fascinated by horses, especially Thoroughbreds and racing, she oversaw one of the few horseracing and breeding libraries housed in a public library in the country. When the Bowie Branch underwent renovations in the mid-2010s, the vast collection was donated to the MHLEC. Most is now found on the shelves in the Library.

Stephenson was a longtime member of the Bowie Heritage Committee and volunteered at the Belair Stable Museum.

In lieu of gifts of consolation, her family requests that donations be made to the Maryland Horse Foundation, 321 Main Street, Reisterstown, MD 21136.

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The Maryland Horse Library and Education Center is a vital repository, preserving Maryland's equine heritage and history. By joining as a member at any level you are helping to maintain our very special collection of books, photos, film and audio recordings, and memorabilia for the generations to come.

To join online, visit MarylandHorse.com/library

THE THOROUGHBRED BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION OF NEW JERSEY NEWSLETTER

Post Time

- News, views and insights that matter to breeders, owners and racing industry professionals - **February 2026** -

In This Issue

Book'em Danno for Champion Sprinter

2025 New Jersey-bred Stakes Winners

TBANJ Membership Application

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Book'em Danno for Champion Sprinter

By Bill Finley

It's OK to call me biased. I live in New Jersey and, through good times and bad, have always pulled for horses that were bred in our state.

But that's not why I will be voting for New Jersey-bred Book'em Danno for an Eclipse Award for Champion Sprinter. It's because he deserves it.

Yet, not everyone agrees.

The race is between just two horses, Danno and Grade 1 Breeders' Cup Sprint winner Bentornato. It's true that both have some holes on their resumes and whoever wins will be a horse that won the title despite their shortcoming. Dr. Fager they are not.

But there's no doubt that Book'em Danno has the superior credentials among the two.

His 2025 campaign consisted of four wins from five starts. He began the year winning a $150,000 restricted handicap for Virginia-accredited horses at Colonial Downs in March (covering 7 furlongs in 1:20.03) and then headed to Churchill Downs for the Grade 1 Churchill Downs Stakes at 7 furlongs, where he finished fourth in a four-horse photo. That might have been the deepest sprint race

COGLIANESE PHOTOGRAPHY

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run during the year. Grade 1 winner Mindframe won by a neck. Banishing, who earned $1,615,930 in 2025, and Nysos, your 2025 Grade 1 Breeders' Cup Dirt Mile winner, were in a deadheat for second, just ahead of Danno.

Saratoga was next, and that was where he proved his bona fides. He made history, winning three straight graded sprint stakes at Saratoga – the Grade 3 True North, Grade 2 Alfred G. Vanderbilt and Grade 1 Forego. It was something that no horse has ever done before and something that will be all but impossible to accomplish once racing resumes at the new Belmont Park, which will mean fewer dates and opportunities at Saratoga.

Yet Danno has his detractors. The argument I hear most often from those voting for Bentornato is that they will hold the fact that Book'em Danno skipped the Breeders' Cup Sprint. That the connections never gave a credible reason for their decision not to run in the Breeders' Cup is something that has hurt their cause.

Bentornato is definitely a gifted horses and his win in the Sprint means something. It is the most important sprint race on the U.S. calendar. Twenty-six winners of the Sprint have been named champion sprinter the same year they won at the Breeders' Cup.

But there's a knock on Bentoranto, and it's a big one. He only ran twice all year, in the Breeders' Cup and in a listed race, the Louisville Thoroughbred Society Stakes at Churchill Downs. The Eclipse Awards are supposed to be for the horses who had the best overall year among their division. To me, a horse that ran only twice does not qualify under that criteria.

Still some voters will cast their votes for Bentornato and others have admitted to being torn.

The good news is that, based on my admittedly unscientific study, it looks like Book'em Danno will win. I polled 20 voters. Thirteen said they would be voting for Danno and five said they would cast their vote for Bentornato. One said they were still deciding. And then there was Eclipse voter Ed DeRosa from Horse Racing Nation. He said he wouldn't vote for either one.

"I'm abstaining," DeRosa said. "Bentornato only started twice, and there's no way I'd ever vote for that. And Book'em Danno ducked the Breeders' Cup."

Should Danno win an Eclipse Award he will become only the second New Jersey-bred to do so. Hall of Famer Open Mind, with back-to-back championships in 1988 and 1989, is the other.

The Eclipse Award winners were to be announced Jan. 22.

The Book'em Danno team is contemplating a schedule for 2026.

Danno is currently resting up for the year in Ocala, Fla., and will have a break of about two-and-a-half months before

continued on page 4

2025 New Jersey-bred Stakes Winners

EQUI-PHOTO, INC. (2)

Bel Pensiero
2025 Earnings $142,150
Winner of the Eleven North Handicap
Bred by ARM Consulting
Owned by ARM Racing LLC and Hudson Stable
Trained by Anthony R. Margotta Jr.

Bingo's Birkin
2025 Earnings $98,820
Winner of the Pinot Grigio Handicap
Bred by Colonial Farms
Owned by Gerardo Franco
Trained by Jose Sanchez

COGLIANESE PHOTOGRAPHY

Book'em Danno
2025 Earnings $817,300
Winner of the Forego Stakes (Gr. 1), Alfred G. Vanderbilt Stakes (Gr. 2), True North Stakes (Gr. 3), Boston Handicap
Bred by Gregory J. Kilka and Bright View Farm
Owned by Atlantic Six Racing LLC
Trained by Derek Ryan

Forever Chocolate
2025 Earnings $91,037
Winner of the Friendly Lover Handicap
Bred by Janet A. Laszlo
Owned by Janet A. Laszlo
Trained by Rory Huston

Gold Trust
2025 Earnings $142,050
Winner of the Joey P. Handicap
Bred by Mike Dini
Owned by Ballybrit Stable
Trained by Mike Dini

Great Navigator
2025 Earnings $159,985
Winner of the New Jersey
Breeders Handicap
Bred by Holly Crest Farm
Owned by Holly Crest Farm
Trained by Eddie Owens Jr.

He'spuregold
2025 Earnings $59,200
Winner of the Irish War Cry Handicap
Bred by John Bowers Jr.
Owned by John Bowers Jr.
Trained by Kelly J. Breen

Mia's Crusade
2025 Earnings $63,200
Winner of the Smart N Classy Handicap
Bred by Dianne Boyken
Owned by Prancing Horse Farm LLC
Trained by Chuck Spina

Riding Pretty
2025 Earnings $157,205
Winner of the Jersey Girl Handicap,
Charles Hesse III Handicap
Bred by Holly Crest Farm
Owned by Holly Crest Farm
Trained by Eddie Owens Jr.

Speaking
2025 Earnings $54,510
Winner of the John J. Reilly Handicap
Bred by Holly Crest Farm
Owned by Holly Crest Farm
Trained by Eddie Owens Jr.

Summer's Comin
2025 Earnings $140,095
Winner of the Spruce Fir Handicap
Bred by Helen and Joseph Barbazon
Owned by Mike Dini
Trained by Mike Dini

EQUI-PHOTO, INC. (8)

Book'em Danno *continued from page 2*

returning to serious training at trainer Derek Ryan's winter base at Tampa Bay Downs.

"We have no definite plans as to where to go," Jay Briscione, who heads the Atlantic Six ownership group, said in November. "I have had conversations with the people in Saudi Arabia and we have nominated him for two races there, including the [Group 3] Riyadh Dirt Sprint. There's more of a chance that he will go in the [March 28 running of the Group 1] Dubai Golden Shaheen."

Briscione said that the 2026 Breeders' Cup Sprint will be a major goal this time around.

"It's not set in stone, but if he stays together and has the same kind of year we would go, working backwards, the Breeders' Cup, the Phoenix, one of those races at Saratoga and maybe that Keeneland race in the spring [the Grade 3 Commonwealth. A lot would depend on whether or not we got to Dubai. It won't be a 10-race campaign. He just runs too hard to do that."

Because he is a gelding and is now 5, Book'em Danno should be around for a while. Will there be more Eclipse Awards in his future? First things first.

THOROUGHBRED BREEDERS' ASSOCIATION OF NEW JERSEY

Membership Application

Member Information

NAME _____ SS#/FEDERAL I.D.# _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____ COUNTY _____

TELEPHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

Membership Categories

☐ Breeder — A breeder member shall be a person who owns the required interest in a broodmare or registered stallion domiciled in New Jersey; who submits an application for membership, and pays the membership dues. A breeder member shall have voting rights.

☐ Owner — An owner member shall be a person who owns a registered New Jersey- bred; who submits an application for membership, and pays the membership dues. An owner member will not have voting rights.

☐ Associate — An associate member is a person who is interested in owning, breeding, or racing horses in the State of New Jersey or in fostering economic activity through the breeding, ownership and/or racing of horses in the State of New Jersey. An associate member will not have voting rights.

Date: _____ Signature: _____

Membership Dues

A check or money order for $100.00 must accompany this form. Spouses are encouraged to join the **TBANJ** under joint membership status. This fee would total $150.00 per couple. Each spouse must fill out a separate form to accompany the payment. Membership will be effective upon receipt and will be in force each calendar year and must be renewed annually.

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February 2026
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Why breeding in Pennsylvania is an easy decision

By Nikki Sherman

For more than 75 years, the Pennsylvania Horse Breeders Association (PHBA) has worked to strengthen the state's Thoroughbred industry. Founded in 1948 as a not-for-profit organization, the PHBA was built on the idea that a strong breeding program creates opportunity across every level of the sport. Today, that philosophy is reflected in one of the most robust and rewarding state-bred incentive programs in the country, one rooted in fertile ground that has long produced elite runners on racing's biggest stages.

Pennsylvania's breeding legacy includes Kentucky Derby winners Smarty Jones and Lil E. Tee, Breeders' Cup champions Go for Wand, Tikkanen, Alphabet Soup, Finest City, Shamrock Rose and Caravel, legendary sires Storm Cat, Danzig and Hard Spun, and Kentucky Oaks heroines Princess of Sylmar and Plum Pretty. That success has not been limited to national spotlights alone. Several PA-Breds have reached millionaire status competing largely, or even entirely, at home, thanks in large part to the strength of the state-bred stakes program. Just a few of those runners include Smooth B, Morning Matcha and Page McKenney.

Since the introduction of slots revenue in 2006, distributions from the Pennsylvania Breeding Fund have more than quadrupled. Over the past 13 years, the fund has paid out an average of more than $27.5 million annually, fueling an environment where breeders, owners and stallion farms are all positioned to succeed. That funding supports an average of more than 350 restricted races for state-breds each year, where PA-Breds can compete at Parx Racing, Penn National and Presque Isle Downs across approximately 340 days of racing annually.

At the heart of the program is a breeder awards structure designed to reward long-term participation, not just one-time success. Breeders earn awards on all Pennsylvania races through third place, even when they no longer own the horse. A PA-Bred sired by a registered Pennsylvania stallion earns its breeder 40 percent of the purse, while non-PA-sired PA-Breds still generate a meaningful 20 percent. That ongoing earning power has real impact, seven breeders are currently on pace to earn more than $200,000 in awards this year, with the top two tracking toward totals between $500,000 and $1 million.

Owners benefit as well, with bonus

Breed in PA continued from page 1

money paid directly by the racetracks on top of the purse in non-restricted races. Parx Racing offers owner bonuses of 40 percent, Presque Isle Downs pays 30 percent, and Penn National awards 25 percent, all through third place. In 2025 alone, total owner bonuses are expected to exceed $5.2 million, further incentivizing owners to race Pennsylvania-Breds locally.

PA-Bred bonuses have the potential to boost a horse's earnings by six figures. In 2024, 2-year-old The Boy's Warrior earned a combined $225,300 in just four races, thanks to $64,880 in breeders' awards, $16,220 in stallion awards and a $5,400 owner bonus. Meanwhile, this year's current leader is Pachelbel, a daughter from the 2020 crop of Hoppertunity with more than $540,000 in career earnings. She has competed solely in Pennsylvania, from claimers and starters to multiple stakes races, over 44 career starts with 11 victories (through Dec. 31, 2025).

The program also rewards stallion owners, reinforcing the value of standing stallions in the Keystone State. Owners of registered Pennsylvania stallions earn 10 percent of the purse share when their PA-Bred, PA-sired runners finish first, second or third in Pennsylvania. For leading stallion farms and breeders, total annual payments from the fund can exceed six figures, underscoring the financial strength of the program from top to bottom.

Over the last three years, the top two breeder and stallion owners have taken turns atop the leaderboard, with combined awards each totaling well over $2 million. Between the three stallions Warrior's Reward, Uptowncharlybrown and Eastwood, stallion awards alone over that same timeframe exceed $1.1 million.

Beyond the financial incentives, PA-Breds often receive preferred starter status in overnight races at all three Pennsylvania tracks. Stakes opportunities restricted to PA-Breds are offered regularly throughout the year, with additional races available exclusively to PA-Sired PA-Breds.

Eligibility remains clearly defined while allowing flexibility for breeders operating under different models. A Thoroughbred foal born in Pennsylvania and registered with The Jockey Club may qualify as a PA-Bred based on residency requirements for the dam surrounding conception and foaling, with multiple pathways available. Unlike some states, Pennsylvania does not impose a blanket breed-back requirement, though PA-Breds sired by registered Pennsylvania stallions earn significantly higher awards, making in-state stallions a strategic choice for those seeking to maximize returns.

Taken together, the PHBA's incentive structure reflects a program built for longevity, one that rewards breeders beyond the sales ring, encourages owners to keep horses racing locally, and supports stallion operations year after year. From champions who have captured the sport's biggest prizes to hard-knocking runners who have built exceptional careers right here at home, Pennsylvania continues to show the lasting value of investing in its breeding program.

A few words from the Executive Secretary

As we end the 2025 year, I would like to thank all our breeders, staff and Board members for making 2025 a great success! A thank you also goes out to the PTHA and HBPA for their continued support making the PA breeding program one of the best in the country. Wishing you a fantastic 2026!

Our 16th annual Stallion Season Auction was another success! The auction is crucial to our efforts in Harrisburg as an independent organization and also as part of the PA Equine Coalition. 2026 will be an important Legislative session as gaming should be close to the top of their list. For all those who donated or purchased seasons, we thank you.

I'm happy to announce that there will be no registration fee for the Stallion Stakes in 2026. If your horse is a PA-Sired PA-Bred, you will be automatically registered and eligible to run. Races and dates will be available and posted shortly.

Get ready for our 2nd Annual Yearling Show set for June 20 at Brandywine Polo Club! Prizes, ribbons and $40,000 in bonuses available to all participants. Wow!

Congratulations go out to our Leader in Breeder Awards, Warriors Reward LLC, with a total of $891,519.50. Uptowncharlybrown Stud led Stallion Awards for the third year in a row with $221,917.45. Wow! We also had 21 breeders who surpassed the $100,000 mark in total awards and 321 breeders received an award in 2025. If you want to become part of our fantastic program or just want more information, give me a call at 610 444 1050. Remember, PA is the only place to breed and race!!

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IN 2026

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Over the last 13 years, the PHBA Breeding Fund distributed an average of

$27.5 MILLION

in awards, owner bonuses, and restricted race purses.

40%
PA-Sired PA-breds Breeder Awards

20%
Non-PA-Sired PA-Breds Breeder Awards

PENNSYLVANIA
HORSE BREEDERS ASSOCIATION

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PA-Bred Fund Statistics: Top Earners

January 1 through December 31, 2025†

LEADING EARNERS - TOTAL AWARDS

Breeder Name	Breeder	Stallion	Total	Breeder Name	Breeder	Stallion	Total
Warriors Reward	677,968	213,552	891,520	A1A Racing	104,072	59,692	163,764
Uptowncharlybrown Stud LLC	477,860	221,917	699,778	Peter Giangiulio	136,472	0	136,472
Wyn Oaks Farm LLC	179,716	181,511	361,227	Kathleen Brady	130,202	0	130,202
Northview Stallion Station Inc.	0	272,514	272,514	Joseph Imbesi	122,965	0	122,965
Blackstone Farm LLC	258,938	0	258,938	Y. Jerry Kolybabiuk	118,876	0	118,876
Arrowwood Farm Inc.	194,060	0	194,060	Dennis Johnson	116,928	0	116,928
Pewter Stable	139,540	42,768	182,307	Richard N. Miller	93,006	22,118	115,124
Sylmar Farm Inc.	178,048	0	178,048	Newell Thoroughbreds Ltd.	111,911	0	111,911
Glenn E. Brok LLC	108,432	68,625	177,057	Godstone Farm LLC	111,338	0	111,338
Equivine Farm LLC	169,438	0	169,438	St. Omer's Farm	107,171	0	107,171

LEADING STALLIONS

Fund Money includes Stallion Awards only†

Stallion Name	No. of Races	Award Total	Stallion Name	No. of Races	Award Total
Uptowncharlybrown	451	221,542	Eastwood	78	36,240
Warrior's Reward	467	213,552	Well Spelled	84	31,873
Weigelia	327	175,229	Medallist	39	27,766
Hoppertunity	288	111,819	Red Vine	44	20,672
Social Inclusion	160	80,417	Pat On the Back	44	19,601
Uncle Lino	126	77,886	Smarty Jones	47	17,836
Peace and Justice	140	59,692	Emperor Tiberius	35	17,277
Rowayton	82	56,711	Talent Search	53	16,264
Jump Start	116	49,675	Flashback	36	16,067
Winchill	172	42,768	Boisterous	93	15,852

LEADING HORSES

Fund money includes: PA-Bred Races, Breeder and Stallion Awards and PA-Bred Owner-Bonus Payments

Horse	Pedigree	Breeder	Races	Pa Bred Stakes	Breeder Award	Stallion Award	Owner Bonus	Total
PACHELBEL*	Hoppertunity-Brilliant Sunshine	Newell Thoroughbreds Ltd.	17	14,850	105,911	26,478	60,208	207,447
CAROUSEL QUEEN*	Uptowncharlybrown-La Padrina	Dennis Johnson	12	66,825	77,082	19,271	24,480	187,658
COME PRIMA*	Well Spelled-My Sonata	Godstone Farm LLC	11	74,700	71,687	17,922	12,578	176,886
NATURE'S CANDY*	Uncle Lino-Easter Blossom	Y Jerry Kolybabiuk	9	46,733	77,972	19,493	28,180	172,378
HOUGHTON SHUFFLE*	Medallist-Runs Like L	Melissa Houghton	8	67,620	50,240	12,560	16,000	146,420
CANDY REWARD*	Warrior's Reward-Unimagineable	Warriors Reward	6	44,100	74,160	18,540	7,500	144,300
SILHOUTTE COVE*	Warrior's Reward-Silhoutte Island	Sylmar Farm Inc.	7	54,100	59,100	14,775	9,250	137,225
HARP'S HOT CORNER*	Weigelia-Katarica Disco	St. Omer's Farm	10	1,000	72,392	18,098	36,160	127,650
SON OF THOR*	Rowayton-Charlybrown's Rose	Uptowncharlybrown Stud LLC	6	0	62,048	15,512	44,320	121,880
NINETYPRCENTMADDIE*	Weigelia-Amblin Easy	LC Racing LLC	8	69,350	39,948	9,987	2,420	121,705
BIG BOYS ANSWER*	Uptowncharlybrown-Empires Answer	Cavanaugh Breen Farm LLC	7	0	59,315	14,829	35,168	109,312
MAILATA	Maximus Mischief-Bouquet of Gold	Cash Is King Thoroughbreds LLC	5	58,800	30,700	0	14,200	103,700
CARMELINA	Maximus Mischief-Complete St.	Lilith E Boucher	4	59,400	29,520	0	13,200	102,120
SHETALKSTOMUCH*	Uptowncharlybrown-Empire's Gold	Robert Burroughs	10	0	53,727	13,432	32,928	100,087
JUMP A FOX*	Jump Start-Foxy A. G.	Peter Giangiulio	16	0	52,991	13,248	33,807	100,045
OKIE DEN DEN*	Uptowncharlybrown-Baetykaty	Equivine Farm LLC	18	0	54,389	13,597	31,992	99,978
DROPLINE*	Uncle Lino-Sour Lemon Drop	Kathleen Brady	9	14,210	52,992	13,248	16,880	97,330
ANGIE'S REWARD*	Warrior's Reward-Awesome Angie	Warriors Reward	4	44,550	34,107	8,527	8,698	95,882
BAILOUT BILLY*	Weigelia-Billygets Arrested	Barbara Wheeler	12	0	49,792	12,448	33,280	95,520
FAR MO POWER*	Uncle Lino-J. D. Safari	Peter Giangiulio	7	0	49,616	12,404	31,240	93,260

**Denotes PA-sired*

†Any year-end adjustments will be reflected in next issue

South Carolina

Thoroughbred Owners & Breeders Association

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2026

Racing Across the Nation

The period between Nov. 20 and Dec. 20 was relatively quiet on the stakes win front for graduates of South Carolina training centers. Barbadian Runner, Divine Intentions and Post Time did find their way to the winner's circle, though.

On Nov. 22, Barbadian Runner, who learned his early lessons at Bob, Jason and Deborah McCutchen's training center in Kingstree, proved much the best in the Richard W. Small Stakes at Laurel Park. While fourth, 5½ lengths back after the opening half-mile, Barbadian Runner started to advance on the turn for home, took over the lead in mid-stretch and increased his margin with every stride, crossing the finish line 4¼ lengths in front. He is owned by AJ Will Win Stables, trained by Henry Walters and was ridden to victory by his regular rider, Forest Boyce.

Barbadian Runner had a fantastic 2025 3-year-old campaign! In 12 starts, he won six races, all of which were stakes! In fact, 11 of his starts in 2025 were in stakes races. Barbadian Runner also had four second-place finishes and a third. In 20 lifetime starts, he recorded seven wins, six seconds and four thirds for career earnings of $810,630.

Divine Intentions made four starts at 2 in 2025, winning two, including the Shamrock Rose Stakes at Parx Racing Nov. 26. She broke on top and never looked back to win by 3 lengths. Divine Intentions is a graduate of Randy and Kala Rentz's training center in Erhardt. She is owned by Ed Bussinger's Carguys Racing LLC, trained by Tyler Servis and was ridden by Frankie Pennington.

Two South Carolina graduates finished first and second in the Robert T. Manfuso Stakes at Laurel Park Dec. 20. Post Time, a former student of Cary Frommer's breaking program in Aiken, trailed the field for the first three-quarters of a mile. He then kicked into gear, getting to the front at the sixteenth pole and sprinting clear to win by 1½ lengths. Barbadian Runner was second best. Owned by Ellen Charles' Hillwood Stable LLC, Post Time was trained his entire career by Brittany Russell and regularly ridden by her husband, Sheldon, who piloted him in all but the first three starts in his 23-race career. Post Time recorded 13 wins, including nine stakes victories, four seconds and five third-place finishes, accumulating $1,558,705 in earnings.

Taylor Kingsley, South Carolina-bred jockey

While the South Carolina Thoroughbred breeding industry has been in a steep decline, we can celebrate a South Carolina-bred jockey. Taylor Kingsley, the daughter of SCTOBA members Arch and Wendy Kingsley, had a dreamlike year during 2025.

In January, Taylor left home in Camden to join the stable of Bill Mott at the Payson Park Training Center in Florida to be an exercise rider. While in South Florida, she was able to attend the Eclipse Award ceremony in February. L'Imperator (Fr), trained by her father, Arch, was a finalist in the steeplechase category for the Eclipse Award.

In March,Taylor rode her father's trainee Cainudothetwist over jumps on Carolina Cup day at Camden. This was her first sanctioned steeplechase race ride.

In April, Taylor made her debut at Gulfstream and won in wire-to-wire fashion on Mott-trained Princeton, a longshot. Her parents were there to celebrate with her.

A major highlight for any jockey occurred in May when Taylor had the opportunity to ride the Mott-trained Joyous Song in the second race on Kentucky Oaks Day. While at Churchill, Kingsley was riding works in tandem with Sovereignty in his lead up to his Kentucky Derby victory. She then spent the summer in Saratoga galloping several of Mott's stakes caliber horses.

On Aug. 30, racing finally returned to Fair Hill in Maryland. Kingsley had three mounts, winning on the Kevin Boniface-trained Fightnomoreforever, and the Arch Kingsley-trained Gossiper, who is owned by Aiken residents Adam Newman, Thomas Rice and James Stainbrook.

Taylor had the opportunity to ride at Kentucky Downs in September where she rode Kingsley-trained steeplechaser Bee Well to a second-place finish on the flat in a $190,000 allowance race at 41-1 odds.

Taylor rode at Presque Isle Downs in October recording a win, a second and a third in six rides. She rode for Bill Mott and Miguel Clement. She will spend much of the winter at Payson Park with eyes on starting her apprentice year in 2026.

New SCTOBA Leadership

In 2026 the South Carolina Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association welcomes a new leadership team. President Jack Sadler announced "It has been an honor to lead this organization for the past 10 years.

However, the time has come for me to step aside and make room for a new generation."

For 35 years, Deborah McCutchen has faithfully served SCTOBA, most recently as a Vice President. While she has expressed her desire to continue serving on the Board, Deborah believes it is time to pass the baton as Vice President.

For over 15 years, Libbie Johnson has provided outstanding service as Editor of the SCTOBA newsletter and Jack Sadler's right arm. While she has made the decision to step aside, Libbie's work has been instrumental in keeping our members informed and connected.

Paul LaRosa assumed the duties of the President at the beginning of the year. Born and raised on the Jersey Shore, Paul developed a lifelong passion for Thoroughbred racing while frequenting Monmouth Park in his youth.

LaRosa currently owns Indigo Farm in Chapin and is actively involved in the sport as an owner and breeder. His hands-on involvement in breeding, ownership and racing provides him with a well-rounded and practical perspective on the needs of Thoroughbred owners and breeders.

Paul is committed to strengthening SCTOBA through financial accountability, strategic growth, industry advocacy and member engagement as the organization moves into its next chapter.

Along with Paul being President, Wilhelmina McEwan and Daphne Wooten will serve as Vice Presidents. Jack Sadler will assume the duties of Treasurer and Wylie Perkins will remain as Secretary. The Executive Committee will consist of Kip Eler, Paul LaRosa, Deborah McCutchen and Jack Sadler. Directors are Dou Berry, Kip Elser, Suzy Haslup, Marsha Hewitt, Ted Hoover, Deborah McCutchen, Mary Quarles and Rich Scelfo.

South Carolina-trained winners

Horse	*Training Center*	*Date*	*Track*	*Type of Race*
Lika Rolling Stone	Travis Durr Training Center	11/21/25	Aqueduct	Allowance
Uncle Dar	Travis Durr Training Center	11/21/25	Laurel Park	Allowance
BARBADIAN RUNNER	McCutchen Training Center	11/22/25	Laurel Park	Richard W. Small S
Bee Well	Arch Kingsley	11/22/25	Aiken	Starter Allowance
Encosta	Arch Kingsley	11/22/25	Aiken	Maiden Special Weight
Sweet Will	Arch Kingsley	11/22/25	Aiken	Handicap
Indy Charges On	Travis Durr Training Center	11/23/25	Laurel Park	Allowance
Scoop the Pot	Kate Dalton/Travis Durr Training Center	11/23/25	Camden	Handicap
By Mink Standards	Rentz Farm Training Center	11/24/25	Finger Lakes	Maiden Special Weight
East Coast Girl	Travis Durr Training Center	11/25/25	Finger Lakes	Allowance
Smile Maker	Rentz Farm Training Center	11/25/25	Parx Racing	Allowance
Bailout Billy	Rentz Farm Training Center	11/25/25	Parx Racing	Starter Allowance
Uncle Arlys	Rentz Farm Training Center	11/26/25	Penn National	Allowance
DIVINE INTENTIONS	Rentz Farm Training Center	11/26/25	Parx Racing	Shamrock Rose S
Sanzio	Rentz Farm Training Center	11/26/25	Finger Lakes	Allowance
Pachabel	Rentz Farm Training Center	11/28/25	Parx Racing	Starter Allowance
Caittivo Ragazzo	Rentz Fatm Training Center	11/28/25	Laurel Park	Allowance
Freeze the Fire	Travis Durr Training Center	11/29/25	Laurel Park	Allowance
No Joke Joe	Rentz Farm Training Center	11/29/25	Churchill Downs	Maiden Special Weight
Bartholdy	Travis Durr Training Center	11/30/25	Del Mar	Allowance
Quasi Warrior	Rentz Farm Training Center	12/03/25	Parx Racing	Allowance
Gone With Duwyn	Travis Durr Training Center	12/06/25	Woodbine	Allowance
Dwelling Legacy	Rentz Farm Training Center	12/07/25	Laurel Park	Allowance
Huggy	Rentz Farm Training Center	12/08/25	Parx Racing	Allowance
Gone for It	Aiken - Cary Frommer	12/10/25	Aqueduct	Allowance
Uncle Dar	Travis Durr Training Center	12/11/25	Penn National	Allowance
Party in the Army	Travis Durr Training Center	11/12/25	Aqueduct	Maiden Special Weight
Fiber Network	Travis Durr Training Center	12/12/25	Charles Town	Maiden Special Weight
Quivira Crane	Rentz Farm Training Center	12/12/25	Penn National	Allowance
Lord Chatham	Travis Durr Training Center	12/16/25	Zia Park	Maiden Special Weight
POST TIME	Aiken - Cary Frommer	12/20/23	Laurel Park	Robert T. Manfuso S

VIRGINIA

VIRGINIA-CONNECTED HORSES EARN ECLIPSE AWARD NOMINATIONS

Congratulations to Virginia-connected horses who were nominated for 2025 Eclipse Awards in several different categories. Riverdee Stables' 10-year-old gelding Cool Jet is a finalist in the Top Steeplechase Horse category. The son of Jet Away had three wins ---all in graded stakes --- in six starts with earnings of $190,500. The Jack Fisher trainee captured the Grade 1 Commonwealth Cup at Great Meadow and a pair of Grade 3 stakes -- the Mariann de Tejada Memorial at Foxfield & the Noel Laing at Montpelier.

Cool Jet was the top performer in Riverdee's stable and helped them to be the leading National Steeplechase Association (NSA) owner in 2025. "I'm very proud of our horses, trainers, teams and partners," said Riverdee's Sean Clancy. "It's been a goal of ours and was fun to accomplish. We had always dabbled and owned some horses but really ramped it up six years ago. Once we started to get more partners, we were able to acquire some better horses."

2024 Virginia Derby winner Deterministic is one of three nominated in the Top Male Turf Horse division. The 5-year-old son of Liam's Map won a pair of Grade 1 stakes last year -- the Fourstardave and Manhattan — in addition to the Grade 2 Fort Marcy Stakes. Deterministic's win at Colonial Downs came in the final turf running of the Virginia Derby. The $500,000 stakes was switched to dirt in 2025. The Miguel Clement trainee bankrolled over $1.1 million from just four starts in 2025.

Virginia-Certified gelding Book'em Danno is one of three in the running for Top Male Sprinter honors. The now 5-year-old son of Bucchero spent his six-month Virginia residency -- before he started racing --- at Gracie Bloodstock in Middleburg. He was an impressive 4-for-5 last year that included Grade 1, 2 & 3 stakes wins along with a victory in the $150,000 Boston Handicap at Colonial Downs. The Derek Ryan trainee bankrolled $817,200 in 2025 and has career earnings of over $1.8 million.

Riverdee Stables' Cool Jet, en route a Grade 1 victory in the Commonwealth Cup at Great Meadow (Douglas Lees).

THREE VIRGINIA-BREDS APPEAR IN INITIAL KENTUCKY DERBY FUTURE POOL WAGERS

A Virginia-bred horse appeared in each of the first three pools of the Kentucky Derby Future Wager which were available on Halloween, Thanksgiving and Martin Luther King holiday weekends. It's Our Time, Secured Freedom and Crossingthechannel made the list of 39 individual 3-year-olds that fans were able to wager on.

Double Down Stables' It's Our Time raised plenty of eyebrows when he powered home to a dominating 17-length victory in his career bow August 16 in a $100,000 maiden special weight at Saratoga. The Not This Time colt followed up with a fourth in the Grade 1 Champagne Stakes October 4 at Aqueduct and fifth in a $127,000 allowance November 29 at Churchill. The first-time out winner was bred by Amy Moore's South Gate Farm and is trained by Tom Amoss. A $425,000 purchase at the 2024 Keeneland September Yearling Sale, It's Our Time was included in Pool #1 (46-1) & Pool #2 (70-1).

Secured Freedom, fresh off a 4-1/2 length maiden special weight win at Santa Anita December 28, appeared in Pool #3. The son of Practical Joke was best in the $70,000, 6 1/2-furlong race with Kazushi Kimura up. The winner was bred by Audley Farm Equine, trained by Tim Yakteen and is owned by Pierre & Lesley Amestoy and Roger Beasley. In his only other start, he finished a respectable fourth in a maiden special weight November 22 at Del Mar.

Trainer Mike Trombetta's 3-year-old colt Crossingthechannel scored a tight maiden breaking win at Aqueduct January 4 and was also included in Pool #3. The son of Omaha Beach was a neck better than White Smoke Rising at the wire in that $80,000 six-furlong

Virginia-bred It's Our Time scores an impressive 17-length win at Saratoga last August (Adam Coglianese).

Virginia-bred Secured Freedom wins a maiden special weight at Santa Anita December 28 (Benoit Photography).

Virginia-bred Crossingthechannel (inside) captures a tight win at Aqueduct on January 4 (Adam Coglianese).

race. The winner was bred by Larry Johnson, ridden by Mychel Sanchez and is owned by Johnson's Estate, Mike Trombetta and R.D.M. Racing Stable. In his two prior maiden special weight outings, he finished second in both --- December 13 at Aqueduct & November 8 at Laurel.

POINT-TO-POINT & NSA STEEPLECHASE RACES POPULATE VIRGINIA SPRING RACING CALENDAR

Virginia's 2026 racing schedule is set for all host venues including steeplechase races --- which kick off the season slate with a series of weekend Point-to-Point (PTP) meets beginning February 28. The Rappahannock Hunt PTP at The Hill in Boston, Virginia ushers in festivities — the first of seven spring meets slated. Three of the seven are hybrid meets and feature a combination of NSA sanctioned jump races along with traditional PTP events.

Following Rappahannock's kickoff event, the schedule continues with the Warrenton Hunt PTP March 14 at the Airlee Race Course, the Piedmont Fox Hounds PTP March 21 at the Salem Course in Upperville, the Old Dominion Hounds PTP April 4 at the Ben Venue Farm in Ben Venue, the Blue Ridge Hunt PTP April 11 at the Woodley Farm in Berryville, the Loudoun Hunt PTP April 19 at Morven Park in Leesburg, and the Middleburg Hunt PTP April 26 at Glenwood Park. The first five PTP's are on Saturdays and the last two fall on Sundays. Sanctioned NSA races will be mixed in at the Old Dominion, Blue Ridge and Loudoun Hunt PTPs.

The 2026 spring NSA jump campaign itself kicks off with the Middleburg Spring Races April 18 at Glenwood Park followed by the Foxfield Spring Races April 25 in Charlottesville and the 101st running of the Virginia Gold Cup Races at Great Meadow in The Plains on May 2. The fall schedule includes return engagements at Foxfield (October 4), Middleburg (October 10) and Great Meadow (October 24) along with the Montpelier Hunt Races on November 7.

Colonial Downs will again play a big role in Virginia's summer steeplechase program but the exact format of how and when the races will be presented was not finalized as of press time. In 2025, the New Kent track kicked off many of its Thursday cards with a trio of pari-mutuel jump races in the morning which were followed by the regular slate of afternoon flat races.

COLONIAL DOWNS PREPARES FOR 3-DAY SPRING MEET IN MID-MARCH

Colonial Downs racing secretary Dan Bork has released the condition book for its 2026 three-day spring meet which runs from Thursday, March 12 through Saturday, March 14. The meet is highlighted by the $500,000 Virginia Derby and $250,000 Virginia Oaks on March 14, which are points races on the "Road to the Kentucky Derby" and "Road to the Kentucky Oaks," respectively.

The Virginia Derby is carded at 1-1/8 miles on the dirt while the Virginia Oaks, also on dirt, will be contested at 1-1/16 miles. Each race offers 50 points to its winner while the next four finishers will receive 25, 15, 10 and 5 points on a sliding scale toward the appropriate race. American Promise and Render Judgement, the top two finishers in the 2025 Virginia Derby went on to participate in Kentucky Derby 151. In addition, the 1-2 finishers from the 2025 Virginia Oaks, Fondly and Early On, both started in Kentucky Oaks 151.

While the Virginia Derby and Virginia Oaks are expected to attract top 3-year-olds from across the country, an expanded handicap and stakes schedule for both Virginia-restricted and open runners has been added to the spring schedule.

Two $100,000 open company one-mile stakes for older runners have been added to the Derby Day undercard —ß the Sandy Bottom for fillies & mares and the open Royal New Kent. Returning are two overnight handicaps for Virginia-restricted runners: the $150,000 Stellar Wind, a six-furlong dash for older fillies & mares and the $150,000 Boston, a seven-furlong race for older horses that will headline the Friday, March 13 card. The 2025 Boston was won by multiple G1 stakes winner Book'em Danno. The $100,000 Golden Horseshoe Handicap, a 1-3/8 miles marathon for older horses, tops the opening day Thursday, March 12 card.

Nominations for all stakes and handicap races will close Wednesday, February 25 with entries being taken one week prior to the run date. Maiden Special Weight races will go for $75,000 for open runners and $93,750 for Virginia-restricted horses. A firstlevel allowance race carries an $80,000 purse and the Virginia-restricted version is worth $100,000. The condition book is available at colonialdowns.com.

VIRGINIA THOROUGHBRED ASSOCIATION

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Virginia Breeders Fund

West Virginia
THOROUGHBRED BREEDERS ASSOCIATION
Newsletter February 2026

Dam Right

By Jeff Gilleas

A reasonable number of breeders believe mares and stallions contribute equally to a foal's genetics. However a significant contingent will argue that a dam, because of her maternal side, controls temperament, athletic potential and DNA linked to performance.

I'm not sure on which side of the argument I fall, but my sustainable model of pedigree consistency on the racing office staff and I collaborated to alphabetically list our select local broodmares in recent memory.

Aye Robbin, a 2003 daughter of Robb, is best remembered as the mother of Penguin Power, winner of $646,334, and multiple stakes winner Aye a Song. The age of Aye Robbin affords the reader an invitation to revisit the early days at John and Cyndy McKee's Beau Ridge Farm operation, where names like Aye Jacoby and Aye's Turn were revered.

Candy One has Taylor Mountain Farm and trainer Lewis Craig Jr.'s fingerprints all over her portfolio. From her first foal, stakes-winning sprinter and 18-time winner Greenway Court ($485,195), to Candy Mans Girl ($291,113) to $214,007-earner Lucky Candy, Yankee Victor's 2003 daughter had a second career proven to be a sage option.

Cat Thats Grey, a daughter of Fiber Sonde bred, owned and trained by John McKee, was a winner of the 2014 West Virginia Division of Tourism Breeders Classic in her final career start, and has gone on to be a prolific mother, giving birth first to Command the Cat ($245,695), followed by stakes winners Direct the Cat ($251,750) and Im the Director ($220,970).

Ghost Canyon helped solidify the fashionable coupling of Fiber Sonde genes to Indian Charlie bloodlines. Successful offspring include stakes winners Hidden Canyon ($319,338) and Bullets Fever ($227,424), plus additional six-figuer earners Never Compromise ($268,785) and Ghost Fever ($118,493). Ghost Canyon was purchased by Cyndy McKee for the modest sum of $3,200 in January 2007 and only raced that year as a 3-year-old, with a record of 7-3-2-0 and a stakes-placing.

Goldendeoro is similar to many successful broodmares, where her second job as a mom easily surpassed her racing career. She produced two-time Cavada Stakes winner Original Gold ($372,649) and picture of wellness Gold Standard ($237,024).

Happy Numbers was a fertile mare whose sons and daughters have an inclination towards speed. One of her most unforgettable achievers was a swayback son of Fiber Sonde named Dr. Feelgood, an earner of $292,745 who won 13 of 15 lifetime races while being unbeatable at 4½ furlongs. Other offspring include stakes winners Great Spirit ($286,695) and Get the Sensation ($100,160), stakes-placed Got Your Number ($151,143), and six-figure earners Heroic Pursuit and Silent Tale. Her daughter Stefani's Surprise is the dam of Hessica, Hear the Chatter and Imagoodchatterbug.

Holy Pow Wow is often referred to as the Queen of West Virginia broodmares, in the ultimate story of triumph and tragedy, having succumbed to an illness during the height of her reign. Her legacy was cemented by graded stakes winner Late Night Pow Wow ($700,400), millionaire Muad'dib, Duncan Idaho ($378,858) and Overnight Pow Wow ($347,675). Her six foals, all starters, earned in excess of $2.6 million.

Love for Lucy produced one of the most dominant runners ever to grace the three-quarter-of-mile oval at Charles Town Races. To this day, her son Lucy's Bob Boy ($1,028,843) conjures up awe-inspiring clockings of 1:16.44 for 6½ furlongs, 7 furlongs in 1:22.73, and an 8-length score in

the $500,000 West Virginia Breeders Classic Stakes in 1:51.06.

Lov'emnrun has the distinction of her son, Runnin'toluvya, not only being in the millionaires club, but winning the Grade 2 Charles Town Classic against some of the nation's finest open company. She has produced Loving Touch ($77,085),victorious in the Lottery Breeders Classic, while going undefeated in four starts, and Leslie Cromer's stakes-placed What'shername ($84,173).

Miss Henny Penny was bred in West Virginia by Cathy Jennings, Tim Jennings and Misner Family Farms and sold for the tidy sum of $62,000 as a yearling by agent Bill Reightler. Her transformation from winner at 2, stakes-placed at 3 and claimer at 4 to alpha broodmare manifests itself through stakes winners The Sky is Falling ($487,650) and Door Buster ($254,981) and four other winners including Ocean Lilly ($209,856).

Mo Chun, a daughter of Feel the Power, brought back memories of my initial experiences at Charles Town Races, and her man-child son Confucius Say; truly an Adonis in appearance and execution. Winner of over $1 million, the son of Eastover Court excelled at any distance for breeder O'Sullivan Farms.

Moonlit Song was an outstanding performer on and off the track for Grams Racing Stable LLC. Stakes after stakes successes for the husband and wife team of Tim and Judy Grams facilitated earning over $400,000. The Fiber Sonde mare's first two foals are stakes-winning colt Moonlit Notion ($168,585) and stakes-placed filly Moonlit Kiss ($148,639).

Roberta Grump only ran once in her career, finishing ninth, but found her true calling as a mother. The modestly-bred daughter of Verification produced Russell Road ($2,001,586), Shesagrumptoo ($453,005), Natures Annuity ($446,588), Sweet Annuity ($260,052), Sheanothergrump ($231,628), along with a host of dependable runners.

Romantic Cork was a model of consistency for owner-trainer John A. Casey, and has morphed into a splendid prioress in her current vocation. Bred by James W. Casey, the Denis of Cork mare has watched her first three sons Teachintherelease ($585,472), Jubawithatwist ($392,567) and Dadsnumbronehelpr ($63,723) collectively excel.

Romantic Twist raced in the claiming ranks after making her way to Charles Town, then proved a valuable commodity as a broodmare. The Casey family found a potent reproducible talent after she produced Romantic Cork ($242,776), Amherst Street ($240,046), and Won't Be Denied ($167,810).

Smart Crowd was a mare whose offspring enjoyed considerable success beyond the comfortable confines of West Virginia. Millionaire Coastal Mission stakes wins include the Frank Whiteley (Laurel Park), Parx Dirt Mile (Parx) and Grade 3 Forty Niner (Aqueduct), while Lewisfield won the Not For Love Stakes (twice), Maryland Million Sprint, and Howard and Sondra Bender Memorial, all at Laurel Park.

Splendiferous Moon raced exclusively on the West Coast, but it has been in West Virginia where her full potential is plainly on view. Gifted daughters Star of Night ($403,546) and Alpine Moon ($362,451) shine most brightly for breeder Heinz Steinmann.

Tres Chic has been a mainstay in James F. Miller's broodmare band since her retirement in 2013. Her most notable creations are multiple stakes winner Social Chic ($503,762) and 2024 Laurel Futurity winner Pascaline ($222,220).

The reassurance a foal receives from his mother creates a bond of confidence, safety and the desire to meet life's challenging events head-on. Hopefully, this piece will inspire you to recall your favorite pairings and their racetrack celebrities. A broodmare is the ultimate intuitive nurturer.

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Rich Cockburn clan legacy weaves through the Piedmont point-to-point charts

By Betsy Burke Donley

To call the Piedmont Foxhounds Point-to-Point important to the careers, life and times of trainer Julie Gomena and trainer-rider Sam Cockburn is an understatement.

Add in Cockburn's father Bay and you nail the trifecta.

A win at Piedmont in 1999 had been pivotal in Gomena's first ladies' timber championship, her first season 'chasing after a top level eventing career. She won Piedmont's prestigious Rokeby Bowl in 2001 on Gary Baker's Double Redouble; three years later, her race riding career was nipped short by a bad spill there in 2004.

Piedmont points in 2005 gave Sam Cockburn and Whinney the junior field masters' division title, and he nailed his first timber win at the Salem Farm course in 2010. A 2019 Piedmont score clinched Cockburn's first foxhunters' championship, and Piedmont was one of five straight foxhunter wins for Keys Discount for his second division title in 2024.

Piedmont was always one of Bay Cockburn's favorite courses, his son says, having set the tone for what became a meteoric rise for the British-born trainer-rider: his first American winner was at Piedmont, March 26, 1988.

And one of his last was at Piedmont, March 21, 1998.

A schooling accident less than a month later changed the trajectory of Bay Cockburn's life story and, by extension, Sam's as well.

On the eve of the 85th annual Piedmont Foxhounds Point-to-Point, Sam Cockburn reflects on his late father's life and legacy.

Sam Cockburn hugs his dad Bay after a win at the Cassanova Point to Point in 2009. *©Douglas Lees*

British roots

Bay Cockburn was born in 1956 at his family's Glebe Farm in Shuckburgh, England. They had more sheep than horses but they kept plenty of ponies, hunters and hunter-chasers at the rural east Warwickshire property.

He grew up hunting with his parents, Anne Blakely Cockburn and Edmund Crosby Cockburn, and siblings with the Warwickshire Hunt. The Warwickshire was established in 1791; Bay's elder brother, Kim, was a long-time joint-master.

After school, Bay moved to Ireland, assistant to national hunt trainer Arthur Moore and building his own yard at the Curragh in Kildare.

He moved to Virginia in 1988 to work for Loudoun Hunt joint-master and leading owner-trainer and former top point-to-point amateur, Dr. Joe Rogers. He met Chrissy Keys through Maryland's Goshen Hunt. Her father Gordon was an avid hunter and respected thoroughbred owner-breeder. They married and had two children, Katie, oldest, and Sam.

Bay Cockburn became huntsman for Loudoun, and for a time he hunted the Goshen hounds, two packs, simultaneously.

His first American winner was the Tim Condon-trained Colonel Kerfoot at Piedmont.

From 1988 to 1998, Bay was four times Virginia point-to-point leading rider, riding 86 winners from 470 mounts – 13 of 141 sanctioned.

A schooling fall in April, 1998 broke his C5 and C6 vertebrae.

Though quadriplegic and confined to a wheelchair the last 15 years of his life, there was literally no pause in Bay Cockburn's 'chase form after the injury. Friends saddled the runners he already had entered at the time of his injury, and friends and family stepped in to help keep his farm going.

After months of painful therapy, Bay adjusted to the new normal and trained from the ground.

He told the Equiery magazine his situation swiftly honed a sense of self-reliance. "Friends and family can only do so much for you," he said. "Then, you've got to do things for yourself. Basically, you've just gotta get on with life.

"There's no point in crying when you can't

blow your own nose."

Bay Cockburn carried on at full gallop, training 92 winners from 406 starters from 1988 to 2013.

He died on Christmas Day, 2013.

He tried to quit horses. It didn't work.

Naturally, horses have run through Sam Cockburn's life from the start. He has vivid memories from his earliest childhood.

"We had this creek that would flood over Zion Road, and we had this horse that my mom bred – Lone Star Lester. He was huge, 18 hands.

"Dad would put me and Katie up on him and lead us over the bridge across the flooded creek. I still remember that."

His father's racing success left quite an impression. "When I was a kid, I didn't hardly understand what racing was all about," Cockburn says. "I mean, I just thought you'd go to the races and automatically win. All those trophies we'd take home every weekend made it seem like that.

"He was my idol. I grew up watching him every weekend in person, then I'd rewatch all his replays on VCR."

Cockburn was 5 when his father was injured. "I remember them coming up to the house after the fall, telling me (and sister Katie) that your daddy can't walk, he's hurt. We didn't really get it."

Sam remembers his father's release from the hospital to come home. "He seemed mad. Sad. Upset," he recalls. "I was a kid, but I knew he knew he was in a kind of forever purgatory.

"But he never played the victim card."

Cockburn knew his father willed him to embrace the hunt field and racetrack, but he was initially "a nervous rider, sort of scared to canter."

It changed when he was about 8, and Sam Cockburn began to embrace his thoroughbred pedigree.

His first races were on a feisty POA, Johnny on the Spot. The pony had an irksome habit of wheeling, at full gallop, mid-race. Trainer Pete Aylor saved young Cockburn's career, partnering him with pony race veteran, the very steady and very fast Summer. It was Aylor, too, that later paired Cockburn with his first hurdle series titlists – Meshwar in 2010 and 2011.

Back in Sam's pony racing days, he remembers his father training from his chair, relying on his exercise riders not only to take care of the horses but to take care of his young son out on the gallops.

Sam felt like "the coolest cat tucking my pony in with the big horses in the training strings. I thought the (young adults that worked for my father) were rock stars. I looked up to them, but I was just tagging along, of course.

Sam Cockburn won the 2024 Foxhunter Timber at the Piedmont Point to Point on his own Keys Discount. Later that year he sold Keys Discount to Mrs. Dolly Fisher. Keys Discount was the 2025 NSA Timber Horse of the Year. *©Douglas Lees*

"One day I remember Grace Pariso was up front – we were jogging up the road. Krystl Lynn Grozbean, I think, and Matt Lanigan were behind me.

"All a sudden, Matt's saying, 'Grace, whoa, we got a problem.' He jumped off and ran up to my pony. My girth was swinging. I hadn't attached it right and it was literally hanging under my saddle.

"Those guys looked after me. I look back and appreciate them even more."

"They looked after my dad, too. They made it fun for me, but I know they made it fun for him."

When Cockburn moved up to horses, he remembers his first schooling session. Neighbor Julie Gomena "gave me a lead up over the national fences on one of her field hunters. I was on (veteran hurdler) I'm Telling. I hacked to Over Creek from our farm in Unison to ride with them all the time.

"That made a real impression. She was like a mentor."

Cockburn's first hurdle win was at Casanova in 2009, aboard former Gregg Ryan veteran Old Fellow. (Douglas Lees photo, left) He rode dozens of races – on the flat, over hurdles and over timber, through spring, 2011, but that fall, Cockburn left the horse world – at the time wondering if maybe forever.

He studied political science and pledged Kappa Alpha at Mississippi State, choosing the SEC powerhouse because his step-father, Keith Heard, and most in his family, were alums.

"I got fat and lazy," Cockburn says his four college years were great fun, a little bit of a blur. He did the traditional senior-year internship on Capitol Hill, then Cockburn and two fellow Loudoun Valley High School grads opened and operated the Craft Beerco in Leesburg in 2015. It was popular, well-rated and fun.

But the lure of horses, laced with memories of his father's drive and determination, and continuing involvement, drew him back.

"It sounds cheesy but my dad did more in a wheelchair than most people do with two legs."

Cockburn shifted focus, lost the weight he'd put on in college, got fit and got a foxhunters' timber horse.

He rode a few of his own, and ran T and C Stables, hunter sales and training, with Mackenzie Taylor for five years. He hunted with Middleburg and Piedmont, whipped-in some, but says he was "still doing the racing kinda half-ass. I wanted to go full into racing."

Back to the future

For his deep dive into – back into – steeplechasing, Cockburn turned to his former mentor, Julie Gomena.

"I swear, as soon as I committed to it with Julie, everything started to click," he says. "She's a great rider (former four-star level eventer and point-to-point champion rider and trainer) and a very good teacher.

"Being able to drill with her every day got me utilizing the flatwork, and bringing these horses off the track to learn to use themselves properly. First you teach them to carry themselves in the ring, then (take it out to) the gallops.

"It feels great to be a part of it."

Cockburn has put together syndicates for two horses he's training himself. Gomena says bringing other people into the game is a valuable skill.

"We need a younger generation of owners coming in, and Sam has connections in that arena," Gomena says. "His father was a unique and positive character in my life. Like Sam, Bay had a great feel for horses."

"It's not just showing up on race day," he said in a Middleburg Life interview. In the hunt and race worlds, "you get to be a part of your horse improving as an athlete. And you get to be surrounded by other people who love the sport. And you get to meet some of the hardest working people in the world."

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The heart and soul of the Thoroughbred in the region
Mid-Atlantic
Thoroughbred
FEBRUARY 2016
California Girl
Virginia-bred Stellar Wind earns spot as top regional-bred of 2015
'Hard Guy' Bedwell remembered • West Virginia searches for path • Bode Miller off and running

EMILY SHIELDS

— Looking Back —

10 years ago

■ Bred in Virginia, and sold at Saratoga and Timonium, Stellar Wind got her start with owner Barbara Houck and trainer Donald Barr at Laurel Park at 2 and wound up on the nation's biggest stages. She was voted the top Mid-Atlantic-bred of 2015 by the *Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred*/The Racing Biz poll.

A daughter of Curlin representing three generations of Peggy Augustus' Keswick Stables, Stellar Wind won four of six starts during her 3-year-old season in 2015 – two Grade 3 stakes, a Grade 2 and a Grade 1 – and finished second by a neck, after getting carried wide and bumped, in the Breeders' Cup Distaff-G1. Many connected to her during her career were interviewed: Augustus, sales consignor Marshall Silverman, trainers Barr and John Sadler, owners Houck and Kosta Hronis of Hronis Racing, Goree Smith (who advised Houck to buy her as a yearling) and bloodstock agent David Ingordo (who went to Laurel to see her at the end of her 2-year-old season and made the purchase for Hronis Racing).

Bred in partnership with Stonestreet Thoroughbred Holdings, Stellar Wind became the first Virginia-bred Eclipse Award winner since Paradise Creek in 1994.

■ The West Virginia Racing Commission formed a committee charged with generating new ideas for the racing industry after years of significant reduction of available purse money due to legislative actions. The resulting report, "Reflecting, Reimagining, Restoring," identified key areas to address. "To me, the most valuable part of the process wasn't so much the final report," said Erich Zimny, vice president of racing operations at Charles Town. "It was being able to sit around a table with some other folks in the industry and maybe blow some ideas back and forth. It was really just the cross-section of people. That was the value more than anything."

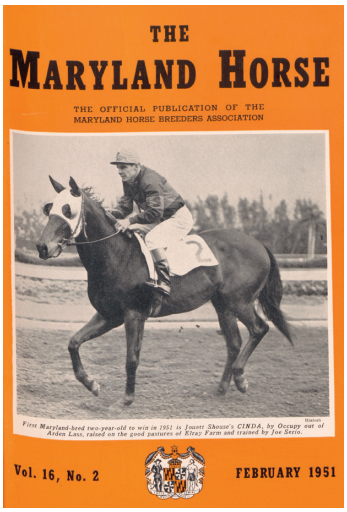
■ The $30,000 spent on a Maryland-bred Street Boss filly at the 2014 Fasig-Tipton Midlantic fall yearling sale was a deal for Cash is King Stable, according to managing partner Chuck Zacney. "I just thought she was worth a shot," he said. Named Cathryn Sophia after one of his nieces, the 2-year-old romped home in the Gin Talking Stakes by 16¼ lengths, five weeks after a 12¾-length maiden win at Parx Racing to remain undefeated.

When her first start was delayed by minor setbacks, Zacney asked trainer John Servis about whether to run her in an upcoming race for $40,000. Servis replied: "Nah, Mr. Zacney, I don't think you want to run this filly for a tag."

Cathryn Sophia won the Kentucky Oaks-G1 five months later, earned $1,229,720 in nine starts, and was sold as a broodmare prospect that fall at the Fasig-Tipton Kentucky sale for $1.4 million.

■ Pennsylvania-bred Mor Spirit closed his 2-year-old season with a win in the Los Alamitos Futurity-G1 (formerly the Hollywood Futurity) for Marylander Michael Lund Petersen. The colt became the eighth Bob Baffert trainee to win the race.

A son of Eskendereya, Mor Spirit was bred by Stuart Grant's The Elkstone Group, which sold him for $85,000 at the Fasig-Tipton Kentucky October yearling sale. Less than six months later, Baffert went to $650,000 to buy him at the Fasig-Tipton Florida sale. Out of Im a Dixie Girl (by Dixie Union), his third dam was Sequins, the second dam of Stellar Wind.



75 years ago

■ The first Maryland-bred 2-year-old winner in 1951 was Jouett Shouse's Cinda, a daughter of Sagamore Farm sire Occupy out of Arden Lass "raised on the good pastures" of G. Ray Bryson's Elray Farm in Kingsville, and trained by Joe Serio.

Cinda was one of 14 starters sent out Jan. 25 in the first race at Hialeah and won by 2 lengths going three-eighths of a mile over the straight chute. It was the second start of her career – eight days earlier she finished third of 13 while "showing speed throughout." The early efforts didn't hurt her career – she raced four seasons, won 17 races, including seven stakes from 3 to 5, in 35 starts, and was one of the best of her generation while earning $140,400.

■ The 75th Preakness Stakes, center jewel of the Triple Crown, was set for Saturday, May 19, at Pimlico. The list of 64 eligibles was headed by George D. Widener's Battlefield, 2-year-old champion of 1950, and Greentree Stable's Big Stretch.

50 years ago

■ "Jockey Sue Graham has the picture right up there on the wall. A photo finish. The day she beat Chris McCarron a nose on the wire at Bowie. When she was pregnant. 'I tell him he got beat by two girls,' " said Graham, while holding her daughter Shannon. Graham, a 28-year-old native of New Castle, Del., who rode her first race in June 1971, was the only Maryland rider to routinely bring a baby to work with her in the afternoon. Shannon would eat, sleep and watch races on closed circuit television in the trailer that served as a women's jockeys' room on days her mother rode. "Somebody's always willing to watch her when I'm not there," Graham explained.

WALTER M. BALL

■ Maryland's Thoroughbred foal production registered an all-time high in 1973 according to figures released by The Jockey Club. Of the North American total 27,255 (also a record), Maryland ranked fourth in production with 1,476, exceeding by more than 100 the record year of 1971. Kentucky topped all states with 4,043, followed by California (4,007) and Florida (2,472). Virginia ranked fifth with 1,037.

Pennsylvania ranked 15th (430) and New Jersey 18th (393), with West Virginia (157), South Carolina (153), North Carolina (80) and Delaware (6) also represented.

■ Dr. Herman Kossow's 4-year-old filly War Exchange notched her first stakes win with a 4-length victory over Gala Lil in Bowie's Conniver Handicap. Bred in Maryland by Dr. A.E. Verdi, the Carlos Garcia-trained gray was the second stakes winner for stallion Wise Exchange, who stood at Maryland's Stymie Manor Farm.

While it was her only stakes win, War Exchange did much more as a broodmare. Her graded stakes-winning daughter Barbarika is the second dam of Hall of Famer and sire Curlin. Other descendants include Eclipse Award-winning juvenile filly Countess Diana.

■ The growth of Dr. Allen Wisner's Maryland equine veterinary hospital in Lineboro and the 36-year-old practitioner's history of how it all began were covered by Lucy Acton. "Brought up around the Maryland race tracks where his father Vernon was a familiar figure for many years, first a jockey and then a trainer, Allen Wisner was a teenaged veterinary helper for Dr. I.W. Frock of Glyndon when he wasn't galloping horses," wrote Acton. "With a slight build and weathered face, Dr. Wisner looks like a jockey today and says he probably would have become one had his high school grades not been good."

Wisner was in the national spotlight during the 2002 Triple Crown season when breeder/owner/trainer Nancy Alberts' Magic Weisner finished a fast-closing second in the Preakness. Alberts credited Wisner for saving the colt's life as a foal and named him – albeit misspelled – in tribute.

■ A horse auctioneer audition was held by the Fasig-Tipton Company at Timonium before a small, hand-picked audience prior to that evening's sale. "Selling" five horses were Rick Opfer, Brice Ridgely, Ryan Mehan, Mike Jennings, Rodney Hoffman, H.C. Wise, John Holder, Hunter deButts, John B. Cook and Calvin Jones.

Opfer and Ridgely were employed by Fasig-Tipton as bid spotters. The other eight men came to Timonium especially for the auditions, traveling from Virginia or Kentucky. The eight "buyers" who turned in scorecards were Tyson Gilpin, Ralph Retler, Larry Ensor, Laddie Dance, Steve Dance, Jed Steffey, J. William Boniface and Ronald Hahn.

The entire audition was recorded for future reference.

25 years ago

■ Mid-Atlantic racetracks were home to four of the top five jockeys in the country in 2000. Clinton Potts, Ramon Dominguez, Travis Dunkelberger and Mark Johnston finished second, third, fourth and fifth behind perennial leader Russell Baze in wins for the year. Potts (369 wins) was based in Pennsylvania. Dominguez (361) worked out of Maryland, but rode at numerous tracks. Dunkelberger (352) also called Maryland home, though he rode extensively at Charles Town. Johnston (336) was a staple of the Maryland jockey colony for the previous 10 years.

MID-ATLANTIC
Thoroughbred
REGION'S JOCKEYS TOPS IN NATION
IT'S TIME TO FACE FACTS ABOUT RACING INTEGRITY
NATIONAL LICENSE BECOMES A REALITY

DOUBLE J PHOTO

Maryland steward Phil Grove compared the Mid-Atlantic circuit to a gauntlet. "Tough, experienced, talented – you could use all those adjectives to describe it," he said. "It's not a given anywhere you ride, but here you've got a lot of opportunity and a lot of competition. It's remarkable to have that many guys that high on the list come from the same general circuit."

■ Mid-Atlantic-based trainer Scott Lake led the nation by wins in 2000, his 336 victories outpacing runner-up Dale Baird (255). Lake also had by far the highest ratio of wins per starters among the leaders – winning 32 percent of his starts (1,045).

■ Jim McKay, longtime ABC sportscaster and Maryland-based owner/breeder, would receive the Eclipse Award of Merit, presented in honor of an individual's lifetime achievements in racing.

McKay, who with his wife Margaret owned Bellefields farm in Monkton, Md., was also founder and chairman of the Maryland Million.

Press Men

From the August 1979 *Maryland Horse*, the crew covering the action at the state's tracks included (from left) *Daily Racing Form* columnist Bill Phillips, track announcer Dick Woolley and *Baltimore Sun* writer/editor Bill Boniface. All were Thoroughbred breeders/owners in addition to their media work.

Walter M. "Skip" Ball was an award-winning staff photographer for *Maryland Horse* magazine from the mid-1960s to the late 1980s. His children donated his work to the Maryland Horse Breeders Association several years ago, and the photographs are part of the Maryland Horse Library as the Skip Ball Collection. In the next stages of our archiving projects, Ball's films and slides have been digitized to preserve this gifted photographer's legacy.

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